

# THE TURNVEREIN, THE TURNER HALL, AND other early day recreational activities

by Edward Ehlert

Occupational Monograph number 24 of the 1974 series was entitled, "Ceske Slovanska" in what until recently was the north side Opera House. This was one of Manitowoc's landmarks. The building was demolished some months after the monograph was issued; however, what happened there will long live in memory of those who were a part of the population of this city in the years preceding and following 1900, especially that part of the population of Bohemian descent.

There was another opera house, this one on the south side of the city, which also had an illustrious past. It was known as the Turner Hall, and it was to the German population what the north side opera house was to the Bohemians. The story about this entertainment center really had its origin in Germany. Involved was a part of the very soul of these people. They were a thrifty, hard working people, who felt that physical fitness was a virtue to be desired and cultivated. Thus the Turnverein was already an institution in the period of history before these people began to migrate to America in record numbers. To tell the story one needs to tell about why the German people left their homeland, and why they came to Manitowoc county. Judge Emil Baensch, the first president of the Manitowoc County Historical Society, wrote this manuscript and had it published in the Wisconsin Journal of History. We shall print his account as an introduction to this monograph.

The Turnverein was more than just a hall where people could meet to develop their bodies and make themselves physically fit. It was a society of people who had a certain philosophy of life, and to develop themselves socially, physically, emotionally and otherwise, the turnverein was the institution to accomplish these ends. The State Historical Society of Wisconsin in its March 1974 issue of "Wisconsin Then and Now," published an article entitled "Turnverein Blend of Fitness and Philosophy Influenced State." They have very kindly given

permission to publish this article in this monograph.

German immigration to Manitowoc county began in earnest about 1850. Men like Fred Borchardt and Gustav Richter had come to Manitowoc in the 1840's, and they published brochures describing this county as something like the Paradise of Adam and Eve . . . it was said to be a land flowing with milk and honey. These brochures were widely distributed in Germany, and many were persuaded to leave their homeland and to come to the forested area of northeastern Wisconsin in which the climatic conditions were very similar to Germany, and in which the soil was rich and fertile, waiting only for people willing to convert the forest into crop land. It was in 1852, two years before Manitowoc was incorporated as a village, when the first Turner Hall was built. The History of the Turner Hall and the Manitowoc Turnverein was published

in the Centennial edition of the Manitowoc Herald-Times in 1936. We relate that account as the story was printed in the newspaper.

In the last pages of the monograph will be printed several episodes from John Harmon's Early Manitowoc County History, a series of articles published in the Manitowoc Herald-Times in the 1950's. We shall relate the views of Walter Peter's unpublished memoir's relating to his experiences during the early years of his life. The Turnverein was an important part of his life. We are also including several pictures showing phases of the leisure time pursuits of people in the early years of this century. We are unable to identify persons in these pictures. Perhaps our readers will be able to help us out. Address "Newsletter" as given in the mailing portion of the monograph, if you have information.

## German Immigrants of 80 Years Ago Boosted County

by Judge Emil Baensch

German immigrants who settled in this county more than 80 years ago were great boosters for their new homeland, according to Judge Emil Baensch, well known local historian.

According to Mr. Baensch they prepared printed circular letters which were sent to Germany and distributed by the thousands among prospective immigrants. He recalls that these letters brought results judging from the census reports, showing a county population jump from 3,700 in 1850 to 22,416 in 1860.

### Recounted Advantages

The letter, written in May, 1851, recounted the many agricultural advantages of this section and advised the best methods to reach here from the Fatherland.

Judge Baensch has prepared a special

paper, titled "Manitowoc Pioneers were Boosters" for the magazine of the Wisconsin Historical society. It follows:

"The revolution of 1848 to establish a republic in Germany was a failure. But it proved a great benefit to Uncle Sam, for those who were active in it and those who were friendly to it, merged into a mass migration which swarmed to our shores. Imbued, as they were, with republican tendencies, they met a warm welcome as "ready-made" Americans. States vied with each other in efforts to induce them to locate within their respective boundaries. In Wisconsin, Manitowoc county was among the most active.

"In 1849 a book was published at Leipzig, entitled 'Letters and Diary of John F. Diederichs.' It details the experiences, day by day, of himself, wife, and four children during their journey

from Elberfeld, in Germany, to Milwaukee, in Wisconsin. Then the letters describe weeks of travel, with fellow emigrants, looking over the lands in eastern Wisconsin. Finally, he finds an eighty in the town of Newton which satisfies him. He buys it and it is his homestead for the rest of his life. And then the letters grow enthusiastic at the beautiful scenery, the pleasant climate, the fertility of the soil, the nearness of market for lumber and farm products, the friendliness of his neighbors, and closes his praise with advising his friends to follow his example. And we know that many Elberfelders did so. Edwin C. Diedericks, well known resident of Newton, is a grandson of the author of the book.

#### Vision Great Future

"In the same year another book appeared. 'The Free State of Wisconsin,' by Gustav Richter, published at Wensel, on the Rhine. It is a very comprehensive description of the state, explains its government, includes a copy of its constitution, gives details of its various natural resources, and visions a great future. The products of Europe and of the eastern states will be shipped by water to its lake ports and then by rail to the Pacific which, he shows by figures, is much nearer to the Orient than Liverpool. It also includes a folding map, two feet square, of the Wisconsin counties which were then surveyed and platted, showing those lying south and east of the Wisconsin and Fox rivers. To the emigrant he especially recommends Manitowoc on account of its fertile soil, its promising future and its large German element. Mr. Richter was the first treasurer of the village of Manitowoc and was extensively interested in real estate. In fact, the east side of the block on North Eighth street, between Commercial and York streets, (except the frame building on the south end) is still owned by his descendants, the children of his deceased daughter, Lina Zabel, namely; Max, of Chicago, Hilda, and Ella of Milwaukee.

#### Advertised By Mail

"Then a group of pioneers decided to try advertising by mail. They prepared a letter to emigrants and had several thousand copies printed. These they distributed among residents of the county with a request that they mail them to friends and acquaintances in Germany. My mother, who came to Manitowoc with her parents (John Schuette) at the age of 17, sent copies of the letter to several of her former schoolmates in Delmenhorst, Oldenburg. One was returned with a friendly poem written on

the back of it, showing a preference for Olderburg, but wishing mother a happy home in the wilderness. It is of the blue tinted paper in vogue at that time for legal documents, 8 x 10 inches, set in two columns with clear 10 point German type, with an ornamental border.

"Did these advertisements bring results? Let the census answer. In 1850 the population of Manitowoc county was 3,700. In 1860 it was 22,416. An average of nearly 2,000 per year may well be called a boom. The following is a translation of the letter above mentioned.

Manitowoc, Wis.,  
May 28, 1851

"The manifold methods and circulars used and distributed by greedy speculators and their agents for promoting immigration to certain regions and places in the United States and by which methods some of the undersigned were also misled and underwent some unpleasant experiences, induce us to give this pointer in the general interest of emigrants.

#### Felt Wholly Lost

"The most of us, stepping upon American soil, ignorant of conditions and the language, and amidst strangers, felt wholly lost, and gladly accepted the advice of parties apparently interested in us, without in the least suspecting that they intended to profit from our uncertainty as to selection of a home, or were hired agents of railroad and other transportation companies, or, in some way, were after our money. Often transported in the most miserable manner, everywhere overcharged, bitterly disappointed in the proposed selection of our homesite, our justified distrust did not permit us to find a free footing anywhere, until and either because our means were largely exhausted, or to end our homeless strolling, we steered for Wisconsin, known for the fertility of its soil and the low price of its land.

"We were especially attracted to the northeastern part of Wisconsin, bordering on Lake Michigan. Here the prevalence of the German element and language, and the hearty reception by honest countrymen, let us no longer feel as strangers, but calmly and more satisfied look for a home and hearth. Of its prominent harbor towns, where some of us lived for several years, we preferred Manitowoc. It is favored by nature and by an active industry, (already the place has 1000 inhabitants and 10 locally owned vessels), has educational institutions in the city and also in the county, and in its social life, nothing that the German loves is left behind. Manitowoc's harbor is a deep

bay, encircling about 8 miles; in its middle the Manitowoc river enters, with a depth of 16 to 26 feet, a width of 300 to 400 feet, flowing westward about 4 miles, bordered on both sides by most beautiful shore lines, fit to provide safety for the entire trading fleet of the Great Lakes, and needs but little for its completion, and wherefore it is very likely that at the next session of congress there will be an appropriation of ten thousand dollars.

#### A Friendly Valley

"There, where the river's strong current makes it impassible for ships, lies in a very friendly valley the rapidly growing village of Manitowoc Rapids, from where the river, with a fall of 200 feet for a distance of 12 miles, presents incalculable advantages to manufacturing enterprise. Saw mills, which however, can only send soft wood down the river, are building up considerable trade by export of their product, grist mills are being built and earnest conferences are being held as to factories.

"Agriculture does not yet furnish the needs of the people, but the land in the vicinity of both places, and westward to Lake Winnegabo, is most excellent soil, and with its low prices, makes it easy for the farmer to purchase (near the city 10 dollars per acre, gradually lessening according to distance until, at about 12 miles, it is 1½ dollars). Easy it will be to harvest different crops, for the soil averages 8 to 24 inches humus, with 2 to 3 inches heavy clay, mixed with some sand, and is aided by a temperate climate. Here, with the highrange of the land, the farmer needs no swamps that extend for miles in the lowlands, which can only be cultivated at enormous expense, and whose atmosphere during the hot summer months seriously affects the new emigrant, so that the fever illness will render him unable to do his work, which, especially at the start, demands full strength and endurance. An area of about 1000 square miles is watered by the Manitowoc river, with its countless streams and brooks, which are alive with fish of all kind, and also guarantees the best of drinking water. The health condition, in this way assured, enable the farmer in several years of energetic toil, which is necessary to change the wilderness into fields and meadows, to establish an independent existence.

#### High Recommendations

"The advantage of the northeastern coast-line of Wisconsin in general, (which already is in connection with the Atlantic ocean by steam and sailing boats) and of the Manitowoc territory in particular,

favored as it is by nature, with its corduroy and other roads in course of construction leading westward, as well as an expected railroad, already chartered, to St. Anthony Falls, the harbor for many navigable rivers entering the Mississippi and the point of distribution for trade coming from this territory, all of this induces to express our highest recommendation.

"We further recommend immigrants that, other than washing and bedding, they do not bother with much baggage, which only makes the journey through the interior of the United States harder and more expensive, and besides, will partly be useless here. The arrangement for passage from New York to Wisconsin and Manitowoc is always better to be made at the pay-station, both as a matter of convenience and economy.

"According to our information the prices are as follows: From New York to Albany by steamer, 50 cents; from Albany to Buffalo by railroad     ? dollars; from Buffalo direct to Manitowoc by steamer \$3-\$4."

Peter Fetzer, from Sporckenheim near Mainz

Charles Kingholf from Wesel

F. Saloman from Halberstadt

Jakob Lueps from Orsoy

Gustav Richter from Wesel

W. Rahr from Wesel

O. Koch from Birnbaum, Posen

Oscar Malmros from Kiel

Joseph Kalb from Fulda

Carl F. Keil from Arnstadt

Wilhelm Bach from Fulda

Carl Esslinger from Amorbach, Bavaria

Franz Goetzler from Amorbach, Bavaria

Christian Christianson from Eidestadt, Silesia.

(Printed by "Buffalo Demokrat")

# Turnverein Blend of Fitness and Philosophy Influenced State

WISCONSIN THEN AND NOW \*\* March 1974

Throughout the ages, many groups have been founded on the ancient Greek idea that a sound body fosters a sound mind.

What made the Turnverein unique was that this organization of German origin enunciated liberal intellectual and social concepts for its members' sound minds in the sound bodies created by a vigorous physical culture program.

Wisconsin, with its large German population, was in the forefront of the nation-wide Turner movement from its United States beginnings in the mid-nineteen century. And the state's political and social history was profoundly affected by the group's advocacy of such things as women suffrage, free assembly, nationalization of natural resources, direct election of senators, child labor laws, and the secret ballot.

The Turner idea was part of the intellectual baggage brought over from Germany by the refugees from the unsuccessful popular Revolution of 1848. It was born during the Napoleonic wars when German university students organized to defend their homeland. One of the young rebels was Frederick Ludwig Jahn, a theology and philosophy student, who cemented the various university groups with a system of mass gymnastic tournaments (turn means gymnastic) combined with mental training designed to fight the enemy.

After Napoleon was defeated, the reinstated German lords viewed the Turners as a threat to the reestablishment of the old feudal system, and the Turner groups were harassed into disbanding in November, 1819. During the 1848 Revolution, the organization briefly revived. When the revolution collapsed, members scattered, many of them coming to North America. From then on, the movement flowered in this country, reaching its full bloom at the turn of the century with about 35,000 members and 6,000 in the women's auxiliary in 169 societies.

Wisconsin's first Turner group was established as the Milwaukee Teutonia Turnverein (verein means organization) in 1850. As the German immigration grew during the 1850's, Turner groups were formed in Madison, Sheboygan, and Green Bay. By the time the Civil war broke out, every town, large or small, with a German-speaking community had

one and Milwaukee supported eight.

These Turner societies were in large part cultural centers. German was spoken exclusively; in fact, all Turner publications, national and local, were in German until World War I.

For the body, regularly scheduled classes were conducted in physical culture for men and women, stressing both traditional gymnastic skills and mass calisthenics exercises. State and nation-wide competitions were held. The national tournament in Milwaukee in 1893 featured a precision calisthenics drill performed by 3,000.

For the mind, there were speakers and discussions on all sports of political and social topics and variety of cultural activities. The main Milwaukee chapter became particularly famous for its cultural programs. Until the late 1920's, attending the Sunday afternoon concerts in Turner Hall, often conducted by Christopher Bach, was a Milwaukee family tradition.

The political and intellectual discussions were concerned with the important issues of the day. And the Turners did more than just talk. Before the Civil War, for instance, when the abolitionist Wendell Phillips, could not get a speaking hall, Turner facilities were opened to him, free of charge all over the country. Moreover, armed Turners were posted to protect his right to speak.

But it was the physical culture that was the strength of the Turn appeal. And in the rapid national expansion of the movement after the Civil War, the need for teachers became acute. In 1874, the national convention decided to establish a National Turner Teachers Seminary in Milwaukee.

To head the school, the leaders chose George Brosius, a professional physical education director and the best known and most successful Turnwart in Wisconsin. The Turnwart, who as the captain of the gymnasium and teacher of the skills, was the most important person in a Turnverein.

Educated in Milwaukee's public schools, Brosius became the Turnwart of the Milwaukee Turnverein in 1866. Two years later, he was appointed director of physical education in Milwaukee's Engemann School run by the Turners to train teachers for Turn groups mainly in Milwaukee.

## TURNER HALL . . .

(Continued from Page 8)

The Village of Cooperstown boasted a better-than-average baseball team back there along about 1915.

Maybe the team was successful because the Rev. August Dusold, later of Lodi, was the manager. At any rate, team members included Bill Krueger, Dr. Alfred Just, Otto Baum, Ben Bartelme, Dr. William Just (pitcher), Louis Holly, "Pete" Krueger, John Conrad, Charles Wanish and Oscar Baum. John Fowley was the mascot.

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He was the logical choice to head the national seminary when it got into operation in 1875, thereby making Milwaukee the center of the Turn movement in the nation.

Brosius was very successful in his work. Under his direction, the Milwaukee Turners won competitions in the United States as well as in Europe. And in his capacity as the moving force behind the national seminary, Brosius taught those who, in large measure, were responsible for accelerating the momentum of the movement into the Twentieth Century.



George Brosius posed in 1890, as the Turnlehrer of the National Turner Teachers Seminary in Milwaukee. The Turnverein, with its dual physical cultural and intellectual programs, had a marked influence on Wisconsin's history.

Furthermore, the seminary provided many of the physical education teachers for the public schools as such programs became popular in the later part of the 1800's.

The early years of the century marked the high point of the Turners. In Wisconsin, many of their political aims were adopted by the Progressives. But, as a German group, the organization was

crippled by World War I. Attempting to stress their Americanism, they abandoned German as their official language which alienated some older members.

Prohibition hurt too. The *gemutlichkeit* brewed by steins of beer after a strenuous physical workout went flat. According to *The Milwaukee Turner*, "near beer was hardly a potion to attract the hefty beer drinkers of the town to the Turnverein."

There were other, perhaps more fundamental, reasons for the decline of the Turners after World War I. Previously, the Turner Hall had been one of the few

recreational facilities available, but by the 1920's, there were competing programs. In addition, by then all public school systems in Wisconsin had instituted physical education programs and inter-mural competitions. Municipal recreation programs also grew.

In the philosophical area, the Turners, in a sense, suffered from too much success. Most of the old goals had been won by the 1930's and new issues seemed hard to find. As one Milwaukee Turner publication asked: "What's wrong? One seldom hears of the Turn Society taking part in any fight. The Turner movement

(Continued on page 5)

## Record Books of Turner Opera House Company Reveals Much Old Time History of City



Turner Opera House, later Orpheum, Razed in 1932. Picture from the Manitowoc Herald-Times Reporter.

Down through the years in carefully kept records and minutes, much early history of the Turner Opera House, one of the early day amusement places of Manitowoc, are disclosed. The building, in late years known as the Orpheum, was razed by the Rahr Malting company in 1932 to remove a fire hazard.

The Turner hall was erected 75 years ago. A glance through these old records brings to mind many interesting items worth repeating on the eve of the city's Centennial celebration.

In the earlier years of the Turner society down to the time that an incorporation of the Turners was effected under the name of the Turner Opera House company, there is little data avail-

able. In the early days it was operated by a committee of the Turners. The personnel of this committee just before the incorporation of the society, consisted of C. H. Tegen, now deceased, Edward S. Schmitz, and Charles Groffman, Arthur Reichert, Louis Rath-sack, William Willinger, Albert Engels and Edward Schmitz, served as secretaries of the corporation during the span from 1904 to 1921.

When the incorporation was formed the Turner members were given five shares of stock of the par value of \$10 each, in the new company. The incorporation in 1904 was for \$25,000 and here is the list of stockholders in the first organization:

is dying and there is no interest in joining the Turners. Even our national organization takes little part in the important civic and political issues of the day."

One writer in the *Milwaukee Turners* worried that the organization was "decaying into an athletic club for unthinking men and women."

To revitalize the movement, membership was opened to persons of non-German descent and new issues were joined. In the 1930's the Turners worked for eliminating teaching of religion in public schools and against the peacetime draft. In World War II, many believed "it was up to the Turners . . . to condemn and deplore the barbaric practices and cruelties of the Nazi's." While denouncing the spread of communism after the war, Wisconsin Turners feared the tactics of internal "immoral anti-communism," which they felt was nibbling away at the

Bill of Rights.

Since 1940, when national membership sank to about 19,000, the Turnverein has been slowly growing. Now there are 67 societies in the nation — two of them added in 1973. Both Milwaukee and Madison still have Turn societies. Tournaments on a district and national level are increasing. The Milwaukee Turners won the competition at the National Cultural Exhibit in 1971-72. And for the first time in two decades, a national Turner basketball tournament was held last year.

However, the philosophical base has not been reconstructed as firmly as the physical one. In the magazine *American Turner Topics*, the national president recently observed that "the most urgent problem facing us at this time is to revise our programs to make them more attractive to a wider variety of people."

E. S. Schmitz, Chas. Overt, John Staudt, F. Konop, Max Rahr, Robert Lill, Aug. Schmidt, Wm. Rockhoff, Carl Paulus, Arthur Reichert, L. A. Schmitz, C. A. Groffman, Wm. Willinger, Chas. Wallschlaeger, Edw. Weinschenk, Jos. Willinger, Louis Schuette, Edwin Schuette, Theo. Schmidtman Jr., Jos. Kostlevy, L. C. Rathsack, R. W. Burke, Geo. Lambries, C. Seeger, C. Beers, Chas. Fechter, Louis Kunz, C. T. Tegen, Fred Vogelsang, John Chloupek, Daniel C. Bleser, Albert Engels, C. G. Lehmkuhl, George Schuette, Jos. Auermiller, Mathias Christiansen, G. Bloquell, Emil Schroeder, Rud. Groll, C. A. Gielow, Arthur Koebke, L. Pitz, Aug. Dueno, Fred C. Schoch, Wm. Brandt, Henry Schreihart, John Schreihart, William Rahr, Peter Endries, Fred Schultz, Chas. Hartwig, Jos. Bigel, F. W. Seidl, Hubert Falge, Peter Schwartzentbart, Henry Vits, Emil Baensch, George Urban, Richard Klingholz, Chas. Kulnich, Fred Schuette, N. Kettenhofen, E. Zander, H. Greve, Carl Gauger, Carl Leverenz.

The first board of directors consisted of Ed. Schmitz, Albert Engels, Wm. Willinger, C. H. Tegen, Chas. Groffman, Wm. Rockhoff, Fred Vogelsang, Arthur Reichert, and George Schuette.

The directors named Edward Schmitz as president, Wm. Rockhoff, vice president; Arthur Reichert, secretary; C. A. Groffman, treasurer, and C. H. Tegen, manager. Mead Hanson was elected janitor at a salary of \$12 a month which also included light, water, fuel and rent. Chas. Overt was elected stage manager.

The records of January 1905 showed that there was \$1100 in the treasury and \$700 was paid off on an indebtedness of \$1500. That same year Fred Vogelsang was elected manager of the hall. In December of 1905 the old indebtedness on the hall was wiped off.

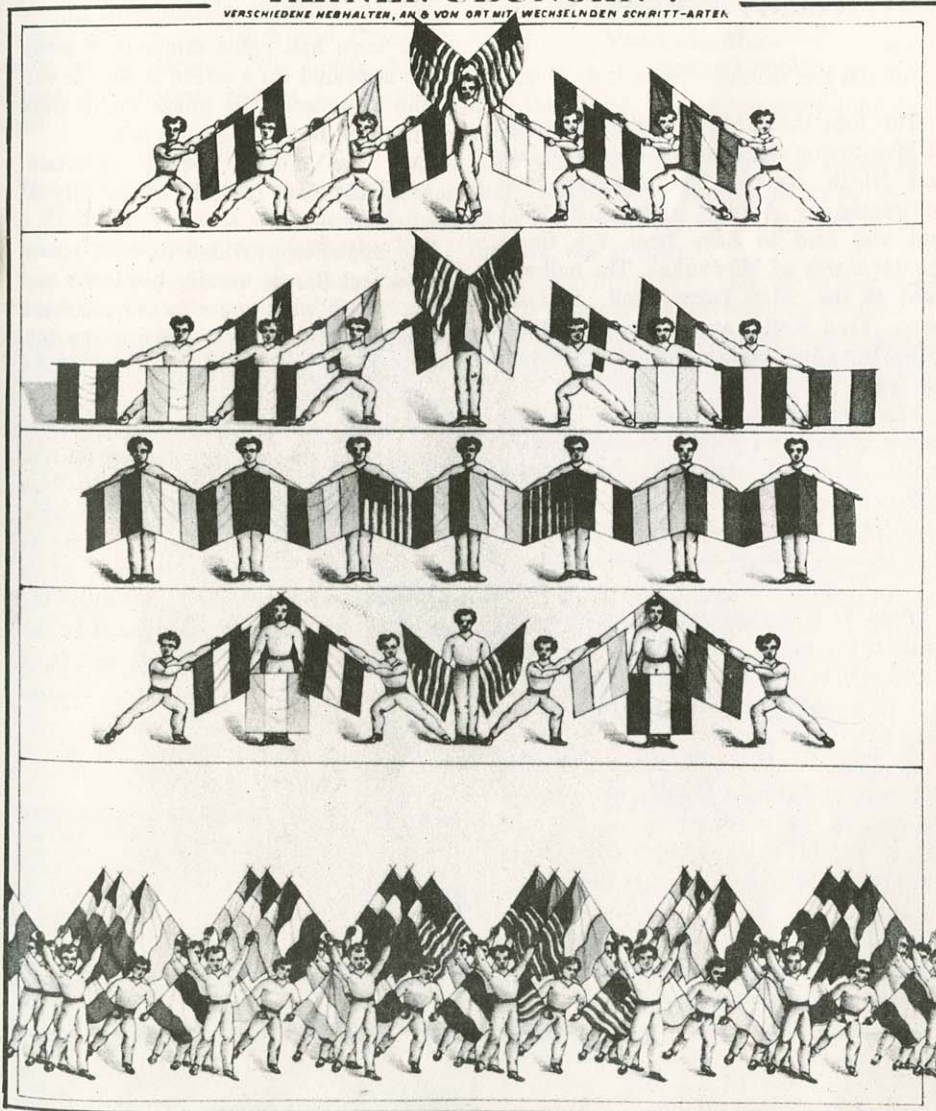
Trouble with Boys

They had trouble with bad boys even in those days. The minutes showed that an extra officer was engaged at 75 cents a night to preserve order during the time that entertainments were taking place.

Albert Engels was elected secretary in 1906. That year arrangements were made with the Western Vaudeville managers to bring vaudeville to Manitowoc, along with motion pictures. The first showing was not a financial success, the receipts for the same being \$92 and the expenses \$161. Arthur Reichert resumed the duties of secretary in 1907. That year C. H. Tegen was chosen manager. Late in 1907 it was voted to rebuild the stage at a cost of \$5,000 to accommodate road shows. The final cost of the improvement totaled

FAHNEN ÜBUNGEN V

VERSCHIEDENE NEHMHALTEN, AN & VON ORT MIT WECHSELNDEN SCHRITT-ARTEN.



Flag exercises were part of Turner calisthenics drills. This illustration showing "different lifts both to and from standing position, including changing footsteps" was one of many routines shown in A. Lang's *Turntafeln*, published in Chicago in 1876.

\$6,100.

Stock companies brought in quite a revenue to the hall. For instance in 1908 the receipts from the Winninger shows for a week were \$330. Albert Engels was elected manager in 1909. In 1910 the hall was leased to Rudolph Goetzler at an annual rental of \$1,400.

At the election of officers in 1910, Theo. Schmidtman Jr., was chosen president; L. Rathsack, vice-president; Arthur Reichert, secretary, and H. A. Schmitz, treasurer. A report made in March, 1911 showed the total indebtedness of the corporation to be \$8,600. In 1911 Wm. Willinger was elected secretary and E. S. Schmitz, manager.

#### Name is Changed

At the meeting of March 13, 1911, the name of the hall was officially changed from the Turner Opera House to the Orpheum. Wm. Willinger resigned as secretary in 1912 and Louis Rathsack was elected. Richard Klingholz was chosen president to succeed Theo. Schmidtman, Jr., resigned. George Schuette was named president in 1914, with Edward Schmitz, secretary and manager.

In 1914 it was decided to reorganize the company on a better financial basis. Six new directors were chosen — George Schuette, Chas. Kulnick, Edw. Schmitz, Herman Schmitz, R. Klingholz and Emil Schroeder. Charles Hartwig, Louis Rathsack and Wm. Willinger were the hold-over directors, making nine in all. A report at that time showed the total liabilities of the corporation at \$11,000. It was decided to offer the the Orpheum for rent to outside parties.

It was decided to inaugurate a move to have the stockholders surrender their stock. Many of the creditors agreed to take stock for their claims. In March, 1915, the hall was rented to Peter Thielen for one year with an option of five additional years.

That year it was agreed that the custom of the directors meeting monthly was not necessary and it was voted to meet only at the call of the secretary. In 1916 George Schuette was again named president: Edw. Schmitz, secretary and Herman Schmitz, treasurer. A proposition in 1916 to sell the property to the Eagles for a club house for \$15,000 failed to materialize.

#### Advertised for Sale

At the meeting of the directors in January, 1921 a committee of three was named to advertise the Orpheum for sale. This committee consisted of George Schuette, Chas. Kulnick and E. S. Schmitz. Peter Thielen still continued to lease the property.

And the final meeting of the directors was held, December 11, 1921, when the committee reported that the best bid for the sale of the property was from George Vits at \$18,000. The bid was accepted and the president and secretary were authorized to execute the proper conveyances for the transfer of the property. Edward Schmitz continued as secretary through the final years.

When final settlement was made by the directors of the Turner Opera House company all the stockholders were paid in full.

Until it was sold a few years ago to the Rahr company the Orpheum was the property of the late George Vits. It was used for years by the Boy Scouts and company H.

## TURNER HALL

EARLY MANITOWOC  
COUNTY HISTORY

by

John Harmon

The first theater-type building erected at Manitowoc stood at the corner of Jay and Ninth streets. The structure was completed by Adolph Wittman in 1851 and was said to have been the finest theater north of Milwaukee. The hall was used as the First Turner Hall in later years. Fred Kalle, an attorney, had his office in a small building which adjourned the theater.

The Large Dusold building at the corner of Jay and Seventh streets was an excellent place to stage balls, conventions and special events.

2/16/62 — Episode 331

There was a time when lights in the building shined brightly. There was another year when all the local happenings of a city by the sea occurred within her halls.

In 1931 she stood there. Silently, forlornly and almost ghostly, she awaited the men of the wrecking crews. The men came in late January. They were equipped with hammers, saws and wrecking bars.

It was the end for the old Turner Hall — in later years known as the Orpheum Theater at Manitowoc.

Turner Hall had been erected in 1852 by Henry Greve on plans conceived by the Turn Verein society. The old structure had a colorful history.

#### Drill Sessions

Early day dances, athletic contests of all types, school classes, group meetings,

church classes, Company H drill sessions and Boy Scout meetings were staged in her stately halls.

She was first a theater and then a motion picture house. The joys and sorrows of the City of Manitowoc were reflected in her owlsh windows.

George Vits had purchased the property at Washington and South Seventh streets in 1919. Vits wanted the Boy Scouts of Manitowoc and Company H (National Guard) which had fought so brilliantly in World War I, to have a permanent home.

But the Manitowoc Cereal Products Co. considered the old Turner Hall a fire hazard to its property and large silos and purchased the rambling structure.

They signed the contract one day. On the very next day the wrecking crews moved in and in no time at all an ancient landmark of the City of Elevators was reduced to rubble and dust.

2/26/63 — Episode 616

The large hall lights dimmed. A jerky image appeared on a screen at the far end of the structure. The image could walk and motion. But it could not talk.

Such was motion picture entertainment in the year of 1917 at the City of Manitowoc.

The audience provided its own sound effects and it was usually boistrous and noisy. There were spots in every cinema production for hisses, moans, groans, gasps, laughs or loud applause — as the situation demanded.

There was music with the early motion picture but it was provided from the orchestra pit in front of the screen. Men like Edward H. Brey provided a backdrop of sound for the movie hero whether he was caught in the throes of a hand-to-hand death struggle with the villain in the plot or making love to the beautiful heroine. One scene called for a



furious crescendo on the black and white keys of an old piano that was ever slightly out of tune. The other scene brought out music of the sweet and low type.

### New Opera House

There were those theater-lovers in the early 20th Century who insisted the flickering, darkened screen would never replace the real theater — the opera and vaudeville — but by 1917 many an opera house had turned to the motion picture at least two or three nights a week.

The new Opera House at 411 N. Eighth St. at Manitowoc catered to live production-type entertainment as much as possible. Frank Zeman, president of the company and Manager Stephan Pech disliked giving in.

The Orpheum (earlier known as the Turner Hall), Seventh and Washington streets, offered moving pictures at popular admission prices of 5 and 10 cents. Pete Thielen was Manager.

C. W. Nelson was manager of the Crystal Theater at Eighth and Chicago streets at Manitowoc. His house, too, offered the motion picture at popular prices.

### Popular Theaters

The Colonial Theater at South 11th and Washington streets was operated by Charles Couey and Otto Rabbeck. The

*The City Directory shows that the YMCA existed between 1907-1910 — Auermiller's Studio was located in the 300 block of North 8th Street. It existed at that location from 1907 through 1915. Identity of members of the orchestra unknown.*

popular Vaudeville Theater, operated by Z. E. Stebbin and located at North Eighth and York streets, attracted large crowds.

John M. Kadow brought to Manitowoc a new concept of sight and sound in entertainment with erection of the glittering new stage and picture house at 913 S. Eighth St. It was one of the finest play palaces west of Milwaukee.

9/27/61 — Episode 248

The big man pushed open the door at the Williams House at Franklin and Eighth streets at Manitowoc. He squared up to the desk where a clerk offered him the register book and pen without looking up.

The big man printed the name — John L. Sullivan — on the registry.

The startled clerk read the name, gasped, gaped and looked up.

“Not John L — the prize fighter — Sir?” he added as an afterthought.

The big fellow nodded affirmatively.

### Vaudeville Show

The clerk closed his mouth and ran out into the street, leaving the great John L. stupefied at the house desk.

In less than five minutes it appeared that everybody in Manitowoc knew that John L. Sullivan among the greatest of all fighters, was in town.

Sullivan had come to Manitowoc that day — Tuesday, Dec. 28, 1898 to appear at Turner Hall. He owned a touring vaudeville company and appeared in one of leading roles.

Small boys stuffed the town full of handbills announcing the big show at Turner Hall that evening.

Sullivan was a legend wherever he went. The big fellow had held the fistic championship of the world for more than 12 years in his prime and was considered the best bare-knuckle fighter in the business.

### Shadow Boxing

Oldtime fight fans gathered in saloons to recall the greatness of John L. Several shadow boxing sessions were staged behind the swinging doors as men attempted to mimic the stance of the great one.

Small boys danced along at the side of John L. wherever he walked at Manitowoc. Every time the man stopped some lad pulled at his coatsleeves to “feel of his muscle.”

Only the women rebelled. They appeared horrified and crossed to the other side of the street when the big man hove into sight.

“It’s a fright. He’s nothing but a pugilist. You may be certain my husband and little Herbie will not go to the Turner



Hall tonight," one woman clamped her lips firmly together as she visited with a neighbor off her back stoop.

### Great Roar

But somehow both the woman's hubby and son Herbie managed to wriggle into a seat at the crowded hall that evening.

The curtains were pulled and John L. appeared on stage. A great roar escaped the lips of the audience.

The prize fighter appeared briefly in the opening act, a light comedy called "A Trip Across the Ocean." The crowd applauded politely but it was plain to see it had come to witness the great John L. in a fighting scene.

The handbills had proclaimed that John L. would fight three exhibition rounds with Jake Kilrain. Jake had also been a fighter of some sorts in his prime.

The big moment arrived. The curtains were drawn and when they reopened, John L. and Jake stood in the center of the stage.

The ex-champ bowed and then struck a fighting stance, squaring away with one big fist stuck straight out and his other hand protecting the point of his jaw. Jake assumed a similar pose a few feet away. The crowd cheered.

John L. tapped out with his right fist. Jake ducked. Jake retaliated with a right punch of his own. John L. ducked. Both men stood like wooden Indians. The crowd became edgy, calling for more action.

### Poor Exhibition

John L. made a motion. Jake ducked. Jake pushed out with a feeble left which the big man blocked with a fist.

By the end of the first round both big men puffed and wheezed as though suffering acute asthma.

Rounds two and three were almost exact duplicates of the first.

Both big fighters were soaked with sweat when the exhibition was concluded but it wasn't from over-exercise, according to those oldtimers who sat in Turner Hall that cold December evening.

In the end, an entertainer by name of Darmody, brought down the house with his exhibition with the tumbling dumb bells.

The great John L. Sullivan had had it — not only in the square circle of rope, but also on the stage.

Many a Manitowoc male resident left Turner Hall that night disappointed and disillusioned.

1/24/61 — Episode 42

(Continued on Page 3)

# Walter Peters, Memoirs of His Days in Manitowoc

My first introduction to a repertoire of Philharmonic type of music was from the Manitowoc Marine Band, when they presented the band concerts in the Union Park, and the Washington Park. The exposure, through that source, to some of the Worlds finest written music was fruitful as far as my personal absorption and music appreciation was concerned. Not only did I learn, retain, and gather some lasting musical knowledge at those summer band concerts, but I also gathered some money that was not a lasting.

There was always a horse drawn vending wagon at every outdoor band concert, that dispersed pop-corn, peanuts, ice cream cones, and pop. We sellers circulated through the park selling, actually I should say, offering, as it was a low pressure type of selling, as we couldn't make audible selling presentations calling attention to our products when the band was playing. If one erred and became articulate in calling attention to your vending, you were immediately hushed and squelched through looks, vocal hushes, finger to lips, and shaking of heads.

I performed that selling service for six or seven years, or until I reached the time in my life when the selling interfered with my hand holding, and strolling through the park, or sitting and listening with someone special.

With the exception of the ice cream cones and pop, we always managed to satisfy our personal taste and appetite for peanuts and pop-corn because being diligent vendors of high grade products, it behooved us to sample every bag of edibles we offered, to make sure our employer was maintaining the quality we vendors anticipated. The sampling could not be classified as pilfering or filching as the product still belonged to us at the time we connoisseurs passed judgment on the product.

Seventy to eighty plus years ago, and more, prior to the inventing and introduction of radio to the world, a small city like Manitowoc, and I suppose all small cities, depended entirely on the local newspaper for all local, national, and world news, and other current topics.

To fill an educational void and bring more intellectual knowledge to a small community like Manitowoc, the Chautauqua System or Circuit was created to bring instruction and knowledge through the presentation, in person,

by prominent personages in the arts, orators, lecturers, authors, composers, educators, artists, musicians, actors, explorers and others.

The name Chautauqua was taken from a New York state community of the same name, where the first of these summer educational facilities, under canvas, was begun in 1874. Soon these travelling tent shows crossed and recrossed certain areas of our country bringing every phase of culture to the people of a community who ordinarily, unless they had the opportunity to travel, would never come in contact with gifted people in their respective fields.

Generally the Chautauqua was scheduled for one week, sometimes longer, depending on the reception they had on their previous appearance. The presentations were flexible, sometimes afternoon and evening performances. The number of people presented varied too, two or three in one evening, plus some choral or musical group. If one attended all performances, cultural contact was made with many phases of intellectual living.

One year one of the orators was William Jennings Bryan giving his "Prince of Peace" oration. It was also at a Chautauqua that I had my first exposure to Shakespeare through readings, enactments by interpreters of the writings of the Bard. Actually my introduction to most of the arts was through the Chautauqua.

I do not recall that I ever paid an admission as I was fortunate to be available for the distribution of the hand bills advertising the Chautauqua in those years that I showed interest in it. I do not remember the admission fee, but I do know that the performances were always well attended.

I remember the last Chautauqua that made an appearance in Manitowoc. Its tent was on a vacant site across the street from a Methodist Church that was located in the 400 block on North Seventh Street.

Electronic progress no doubt hastened the demise of Chautauqua, when a turn of a knob on that new invention, radio, brought everything into the living room.

I realize, when I think about it, if it had not been for the eight years of grade school attendance in the German Lutheran School, South Eighth and Hancock street, that many events,



experiences and incidents would not have been part of my boyhood, if it had not been necessary to walk those thirteen blocks to that school, through the business and entertainment area, of the city.

One of the buildings that was within my walking and viewing scope, and became part of my after school activity was the Saengerhalle Deutches Turnverein, also known as the Orpheum Theatre. For the uninformed that was the meeting hall for German songfests and gymnastics. This building was on the southwest corner of South Seventh and Washington streets, and became a casualty of the building wreckers quite a few years ago.

There was also an imbibing room (saloon) known as the Rathskeller in the basement that could be entered from inside or outside of the building. In its palmier days the Orpheum was a great entertainment center, and in its time was used for pro-intercity and high school basketball games, dances, expositions, automobile exhibitions, road show, home talent productions, high school proms and graduations.

It was in the High School basketball season of 1922-1923 that the last school games were played in the Orpheum, or used for any school activity after 1932, as Lincoln High School facilities took care of every extra curricular need, when that educational building was built.

The stage was a normal theatre size, and many an entertainer who was to continue on to theatrical fame, trod its boards.

The auditorium or seating part of the Orpheum was not as spacious as the Opera House on the northside, however its viewing capacity was increased by a balcony that encircled the stage on three sides.

In those years the travelling road shows were a part of every small community's entertainment program, and definitely one of the eras ways of life. Those were the only live shows with well travelled personnel we would ever see, unless one journeyed to Milwaukee or Chicago.

The road shows generally booked for a week, and offered a different production every night. Their portfolios of productions ranged from Shakespearean plays to Uncle Toms Cabin, and reproductions of the current Broadway plays. In their billing and advertising of the plays to be presented, the actors and actresses were always billed as coming directly to Manitowoc (or Sheboygan, Green Bay etc.) or whatever city they were playing, direct from their just finished successful appearance on a Broadway

stage. Even though the actors were no doubt aspiring stage struck novices from the last city where the show had made an appearance.

They literally "drummed up" business every day as they would have a small street parade in the business area, led by a cornet player and a booming bass drum. The sound of the drum was generally enough to attract people to see what was going on, and it was very visible advertising through noise and placards.

I have always remembered one of the parades, when the evenings performance was going to be Uncle Toms Cabin. Besides the white actors and actresses (some of them blackened to resemble negroes) there were three of the largest, blackest blood hounds I had ever seen. They would be seen and heard in the scene where "Liza" crossed the ice. In the street parade it required a man for each blood hound to hold them in check (the dog handlers were free loaders recruited from the saloon of the Orpheum) as the dogs literally dug their nails into the brick pavement. They practically dragged the men forward as they strained to reach the colored character walking ahead of them. Saliva was dripping from their massive jowls, and their large droopy ears flapping against their ungainly bodies as they loosened ear deafening bays at their intended victim. They were the personification of canine bestial fierceness, and when they passed by, one drew farther back on the sidewalk to place more distance away from them.

After the parade, and the return to the Orpheum, and when the blood hounds were released from their leashes, they immediately were all over the character who had been their goal in the parade. Their intended victim would push them away, and remove the meat he had stored on him during the parade, and then fed it to them.

This was their first meal of the day, and to earn it they too had to do their part of the acting. They had been allowed to sniff the meat on him at the start of the parade, which drove them frantic, and increased the intensity of their share of the acting. Actually they were gentle beasts as you could literally take the food from their mouths without a harmful protest.

One of the theatrical groups I have always remembered, was known as the "Winniger Players". They appeared in Manitowoc many times, at the Orpheum and Opera House, and all of their presentations were well attended. Most of the group were supposed to be members of the Winniger family, and I do remember that there was a Charles, Frank and some

sisters in the casting. He, Charles, in later years, became a well known stage, screen, radio and television personality. He was known for his characterization of the Captain in "Show Boat".

Due to my age, and the hour of the stage plays, at that early boyhood era I never viewed any of the road show productions, although I earned the right to see them. As soon as I became aware that a road show was going to be at the Orpheum or the Opera House, I made myself known to the advance agent for the job of distributing hand bills. The advertising notices were passed out every day describing that evening performance. I, and one other boy, prior to the first show, placed cards in every business window that permitted the display, and after school each day we walked up and down North and South Eighth and Washington streets, passing out hand bills to every one we met. Our gratuity? two tickets each to every performance. When the Winnigers were playing, it was Charles Winniger whom we had to contact for the particular days bills, and after distribution we should obtain our tickets from him.

I always sold my tickets, except those that my parents used, but most of the time I converted the tickets into money, at a discount to the buyer of them. The admission fee that was asked escaped my memory, or what the final money return was for my services, all I remember it was money that could buy a Wild West Magazine or another Horatio Alger book at the Bigel or Fechter book stores, or a thick chocolate peanut, marshmallow cluster at Kretches candy and ice cream parlor.

## The Turnverin

Excerpt from the book  
NEW HOLSTEIN  
WHEN I WAS A BOY

by Hobart H. Kletzien

Among these I must include gymnastic or "turning" as we called it. The New Holstein Turn Verein was a highly regarded part of the life of the community. And properly so. For here young people learned to take pride in having a strong, sound healthy body. The Turners' motto was "Frisch, Frei, Stark, Treu" — Alert, Free, Strong, Faithful. They sought to develop manliness, skill, gracefulness, poise, erect carriage and a sense of personal pride. And independence. For the activities were individual rather than team effort.

Turn Vereins existed in most towns

where citizens were largely of German extraction. The earliest settlers brought the activity and tradition with them from Germany. Thus it was an intimate and important part of the peoples' heritage and it contributed importantly to the introduction of physical education programs in public schools later on.

In a sense it was a personal discipline. Edward Funke was the Turnmeister during my childhood. Tuesday and Friday evenings were the scheduled sessions. The session started with lining up shoulder to shoulder for roll call. A command to turn right and "vorwaerts marsch" and we started on a brisk walk around the hall keeping step as Mr. Funke tapped his wooden wand on the floor. Next followed a quick-step, then an easy lope a dozen times around the hall — not just to limber up but to warm up, for the hall in winter was icy cold and the two wood burning stoves were no match for winter weather in a place that had no heat at all except on Tuesday and Friday evenings.

Calisthenics followed, usually with wands, but often with Indian clubs or dumbbell. Apparatus included parallel and horizontal bars, buck, long horse, and flying rings. All exercises were judged on good form and rhythm, stressed perfection in timing and movement from start to dismount

The climax of the season was Schauturn of Exhibition Gymnastics. People from the area crowded the hall to watch the contestants who were judged and rated 1-2-3 by former turners. Outstanding gymnasts like Carl Moebius from a Milwaukee Turn Verien put on daring exhibition.

Perfection of individual performance rather than victory over an opponent or defeat of a rival was the basic objective. This attitude in gymnastics can have a strong influence in molding the character of the individual and the community. Much can be said in favor of the Turners philosophy.

# THE TURNERS

Excerpt from  
RECREATION IN WISCONSIN  
BADGER HISTORY

Today it is second nature for people to turn to sports and games for recreation. But years ago people were almost ashamed to play. Turnverein Societies (organized athletic groups) helped to interest Wisconsinites in team and individual sports. The Turners, as members were called, urged teachers to include classes of games and exercises in the schools.

## Fünfundzwanzig Jähriges Stiftungsfest des Freien Sängerbundes von Manitowoc Am 25. April 1880.

# CONCERT!

### PROGRAMM:

#### I. THEIL.

- |   |              |
|---|--------------|
| 1. Fest-Marsch — Orchester  | Reubig.      |
| 2. Um Mitternacht — Gemischter Chor.  | Lachner.     |
| 3. An die Heimath — Solo für Sopran,<br>Vorgetragen von Fräulein Anna Beer. | Krebs.       |
| 4. Walpurgis Nacht — Solo, Chor und Orchester,                              | Mendelssohn. |
| 5. Der Schöne Jäger — Kap Solo<br>Vorgetragen von Herrn C. Zintner.         | Reiffiger.   |
| 6. Fantasie für Piano<br>Vorgetragen von Fräulein A. Becker.                | Locher Raff. |
| 7. Schlosserlied — Männerchor   | Otto.        |

#### II. THEIL.

- |  |           |
|--|-----------|
| 8. Overture zur Oper „Martha“  | Flotow.   |
| 9. Im Sommer — Gemischter Chor.  | Hauptmann |
| 10. Schottisches Volkslied — Sopran Solo,<br>Vorgetragen von Fräulein U. Haberland.  | A. Schöne |
| 11. Am Meer — Solo für Basssänger,<br>Vorgetragen von Herrn D. Türpe.  | Schubert. |
| 12. Frohsinn — Walzer Rondino,<br>Gemischter Chor und Orchester.   | Gumbert   |
| 13. Der Himmel hat eine Thräne geweint — Solo für Sopran mit Begleitung von Clarinette und Piano,<br>Vorgetragen von Frau Bieling. | Rücken    |
| 14. Auf ihr Brüder laßt uns wallen — Männerchor,<br>Vorgetragen von sämmtlichen anwesenden Vereinen.                               | Stung     |

Nach Beendigung des Fest-Marsches wird Herr N. M. Richter einen kurzen Vortrag über die Entstehung und Entwicklung des Freien Sängerbundes einschalten.

## Abends, Großer Ball.

Anfang 8 Uhr. — Eintritt 50 Cents, Damen frei.

Mitglieder des Freien Sängerbundes und der eingeladenen Vereine haben freien Zutritt.



In 1806 the French Emperor Napoleon defeated the German Armies. He added the German states to his empire. His soldiers forced men from these states to serve in the French army. Some people, like Friedrich Jahn, were afraid these young men might lose their German heritage. So Jahn organized the Turnvereins (gymnastic societies). He hoped to train young people in athletics. Someday these men would become leaders to free their country.

Jahn wrote about his idea in 1810. The following year he opened the first Turner meeting hall in Berlin. Altogether, 500 boys and young men answered the call to take part in gymnastic activities.

With the final defeat of Napoleon in 1815, the German states were freed from French control. The German people, however, did not have a democratic government. Their rulers were afraid of the ideas of the Turners. Friedrich Jahn was put in prison. During the next twenty years it was difficult for Turners to hold meetings.

By 1848 many Germans were not pleased with their rulers. A revolution broke out. Turners and other leaders looked forward to freedom. They were eager for the German states to become one nation. But the revolution failed. Teachers, lawyers, writers, doctors and students who had supported the revolution had to leave their homes. Many moved to Wisconsin. They were known as the "Forty eighters." These German immigrants brought not only the Turner movement, but customs and traditions that became part of our Wisconsin heritage.

The first Turnverein was started in Milwaukee in 1853. August Willich led the group. Within a year there were 100 members in that club. Other societies were started at Fond du Lac, La Crosse, Racine, Sheboygan and Madison. The movement spread to other states. Soon there were Turner societies from coast to coast. All clubs helped young men to develop "sound minds in sound bodies."

Turners were pleased with government in the United States. One man called America "the reborn Europe." He said that immigrants from European countries helped America to grow. Turners urged their members to become good citizens. Some societies set up special evening and weekend classes. There immigrants learned about American history and law, the constitution, and the English language.

Turners began sponsoring other activities. Libraries, singing group, special programs, and acting groups were started. At Turner conventions, prizes were awarded to members of these groups as well as to athletes.

Not all Turners agreed with their organization. Some wanted it to become a political party. Others insisted that it be a huge physical education project.

For a time the importance of physical education was featured in a national newspaper *Later*, however, the paper printed political articles on the front pages. Physical education was pushed to the back pages.

During the Civil War, many Turners joined the army. Company C was made up of Turners from Milwaukee. With hundreds of men at camp, Turner halls closed. After the war Turner societies again began to grow. In 1865 there were 6,000 members in Wisconsin. By 1874 there were twenty societies in the state. Membership was 14,000.

Turners urged school leaders to start physical education classes. A Turner school for training physical education teachers had started in New York before the Civil War. In 1876 the school moved to Milwaukee. At a national convention one speaker said, "How wonderful it would be to introduce physical training into all the schools of our country. There is not a more beautiful gift than this to share with the American people."

Many school leaders now started to include physical training in classes. In 1892 a Turner teacher began classes in Madison schools. He traveled between schools and used classrooms as gymnasiums. In good weather games and exercises were held outdoors. From 1895 until the schools built their own gymnasiums, classes were also held at the Madison Turner Hall.

Turner Hall was also used for plays and concerts. The first kindergarden in the city was held there. Before the public library was organized, Turner Hall contained a lending library. It was open to all citizens of Madison.

After the Civil War, politics was no longer important in Turner societies. The Turner idea had been accepted by schools. Physical education became an important class in most cities. There are groups of Turners still active in some Wisconsin cities. Turners can be proud of their place in American history.

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## TURNER HALL . . .

*(Continued from Page 3)*

The Seitz Recreation fielded a better than average girls softball team in the summer of 1932.

On the squad were Eleanor Geigel, Ethel Mathews, Baneatta Behnke, Ethel Reiboldt, Anne Johnson, Marie Aumann, Varlarie Kelley, Katherine Jagemann, Marion Bruins, Irene Aumann, Marcella Bermke, Marie Thielen and Agnes Brady.

And the team was good. In one of its opening games the girls piled up a 33-to-5 victory. Stoney McGlynn Sr. was manager and coach. Episode 624

Episode 624

Manitowoc's first "college" basketball team was comprised of five players — no more, no less.

The Manitowoc Business College quintet of 1906 was made up of Gus Gloe, Zeke Dunke, Ted Hagebow, Arno Rusch and Carl Isselman.

If one of the boys was ill — or fouled out of a contest — Coach Prof. J. A. Book tore at his hair and did the best he could with the remaining four — or three — players.

Episode 621

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Speaking of basketball, the Manitowoc Follies five — a girls' cage team coached by Joseph Logan, one of the Grimms basket wisardry twins — competed for the state championship in 1927. On the squad were Odelia Burkhart, Ruth Hansen, Grace Bonin, Gladyce Peronto, Margaret MacKenzie, Catherine Handl and Elizabeth Kries. Miss Burkart was top scorer — as a matter of fact she was the leading scorer in girls' basketball in the state. In 15 games she had amassed a total of 239 points — which was much better than many men cagers could boast.

Episode 542

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Night baseball came to the City of Two Rivers for the first time in history the night of Tuesday, June 2, 1931. But there was something even bigger in store for the Two Rivers baseball fan that evening.

Grover Alexander, one-time great pitching ace of National League teams and star of the 1926 World Series, was scheduled to appear as pitcher for the House of David nine that was pitted against the best the Mirro nine could offer in the way of diamond prowess.

The House of David team brought its own portable lights and a huge crowd assembled at the City Recreation Park diamond at Two Rivers.

The great pitcher sat on the House of David bench throughout the contest. He was a bit under the weather, he said, and a stiff, cool breeze off Lake Michigan chilled his pitching arm to the bone.

The House of David visitors defeated the Two Rivers team, but not before a whale of a battle. Lefty Kohls, young twirler for the Two Rivers team, held the bearded gentlemen pretty well in check and it wasn't until the late innings that the visitors were able to notch a 2-0 victory.

Episode 602

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You have to admit. There was something about a motion picture of the mid-20s.

Maybe it was your right of audience participation that made the silent flickers so attractive. You had the right to warn the hero of great danger lurking up on him from behind and everybody knew

you — as a spectator — were expected to hiss the villain. The back-hearted scoundrel expected it himself and his rating at the box office depended on the number, variety and duration of audible audience hisses and cat calls he received each evening.

Of course, you — as a spectator — were also expected to cheer and spur the hero on to greater efforts and feats. The noise of any crowd was the yardstick of his success as a cinema actor.

#### Liked Silent Movies

An oldtime theater goer is convinced that he got more out of the silent movies than he does with the four-star extravaganzas of today.

“Take the case of Hoot Gibson and his appearance in ‘Painted and Ponies’ at the Strand Theater at Manitowoc early in the year of 1928. Hoot was quite a cowboy actor and quite a rider. His horse threw him in the picture and he landed on the

backside of his chaps. Even though Hoot uttered not a word, I groaned for him and could actually feel the ached and pains of his terrible fall. As long as the audience had to groan for him, I figured I might as well do a good job at it.”

There was something else to say for the old silent screen. Movie goers could munch popcorn to their heart’s delight and be assured they were bothering no one. The silent movie had its drawbacks, however, unless you were a reader — and a pretty good one — you were still mulling around in reel one trying to figure out what was going on when the house lights had brightened and the moving pictures were concluded for the night.

Biggest drawback to the oldtime movie was the wide-brimmed hat worn by the woman who chose — of all seats in the opera house — the one directly in front of you.

Episode 568

The Rivoli Theater of Two Rivers, not to be left at the starting gate in this new sound motion picture business in early 1929, installed a sound system of its own. The moving pictures talked, after a fashion, and several sounds, like the roar of cannons and stampede of horses and cattle, could be distinctly heard.

The new sound system at the Rivoli was known as Bristolphone of Phonofilm and William Haines could actually be seen and heard as he paraded on a stage in front of a movie camera.

Early talking pictures were just fair, at best. Only parts of each film were in sound until Al Jolson came along with his full length movie — “The Singing Fool”.

Episode 586

## MANITOWOC COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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