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**American Turners**

**Records, 1853-2004**

**Mss 030**

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**Mss 030**

**28.1 c.f. (24 cartons and 8 flat boxes)**

### **ABSTRACT**

Immigrants to the United States in the nineteenth century founded organizations that served as social centers, maintained cultural identity, and promoted the ideals and the interests of the immigrants and their American-born descendants. The American Turners is an example of such an organization. Established by German immigrants in 1850, the American Turners advocated a liberal political philosophy and fought to protect both the political rights and the German heritage of the immigrants. The Turners encouraged the practice of exercise and physical fitness, and they convinced school boards in many cities to make physical education a part of the educational curriculum.

The American Turner records include annual reports, minutes and correspondence relating to the national officers, correspondence with local societies, national convention minutes and materials, financial and membership records, national committee records, records and materials from national sporting events sponsored by the American Turners, records of the Turner Pioneers and the Women's Auxiliary, Turner publications, and materials from the German Turner movement and other organizations related to the American Turners.

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### **ACQUISITION**

Presented by the American Turners, the Athenaeum Turners, and individual members of the American Turners, October 1978-August 1999.

A78-11, A87-17, A89-12, A90-32, A91-11, A93-15, A93-20, A93-30, A94-15, A94-27, A94-32, A94-73, A94-75, A94-77, A94-78, A94-80, A95-37, A1998/99-018, A1999/00-001

Processed by Gregory H. Mobley, April 2002.

## HISTORICAL NOTE

European immigrants who came to the United States during the nineteenth century established organizations similar to those they had belonged to in their native lands. These associations served as social centers, helped maintain a sense of cultural identity, and promoted the political interests of the immigrants and their American-born descendants. Some groups even influenced developments in American society at large.

The American Turners is an example of such an organization. Founded in 1850 by German immigrants who had fled their homeland following the failure of an 1848 revolution designed to introduce democratic reforms into the governments of the German states, the American Turners represented a continuation of a political and athletic organization many of the immigrants had known in their native land. The group's local societies (known as "Turnvereins") acted as social, athletic, and political centers for German-Americans in many communities. Turners actively opposed the Know-Nothing Party and slavery in the 1850s, pushed for the teaching of the German language in public schools, and worked to maintain a sense of German culture among German-Americans.

The most important contribution of the American Turners to American life has been the organization's advocacy of fitness and physical education. Turners (the name comes from the German word for "gymnast") succeeded in making physical education part of the curriculum of many school systems across the country, and the Normal College of the American Gymnastic Union, a school for the training of physical education instructors started by the American Turners in 1866, provided many of the early teachers. Turners were among the leaders of the playground movement that swept the United States during the early years of the twentieth century.

The Turner movement began in Germany during the second decade of the nineteenth century, at a time when the German states were dominated by Napoleonic France. Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778-1852), a teacher in Berlin, began conducting outdoor physical education classes in 1811. Jahn used these classes both to improve the physical conditioning of the students and to instill in them a sense of German nationalism; his goal was to prepare the students for a war of national liberation against France. In 1813 Jahn and his students were members of the German military forces that took part in that war against France.

In the years following the war gymnastic societies based on Jahn's principles of physical education (which emphasized the use of gymnastic apparatus like the parallel bars, the rings, the balance beam, the horse, and the horizontal bar, all invented by Jahn) arose in several German cities. Many members of these societies advocated democratic reforms in government, a stance that angered the leaders of the German states. The Turner societies faced government-imposed restrictions from 1819 to 1842 that sharply limited their activities. Jahn himself was in virtual house arrest from 1819 to 1824 and remained under government surveillance until the 1840s.

The end of restrictions in 1842 revived the Turner movement, leading to both increased growth

in membership and a renewal of political activism. When revolutions broke out in the German states in 1848, many Turners took up arms to fight for their democratic ideals. Other Turners, including Jahn, opposed this action, believing that democratic reforms could be introduced through nonviolent means. These differences split the Turner movement. When the 1848 revolutions failed, Turners who had participated in the fighting fled to the United States. The Turners who stayed in Germany adopted a more conservative stance; Turner societies became apolitical centers for gymnastics and exercise.

The Turners who came to the United States quickly established gymnastic societies (known as Turnverein or Turngemeinde) in their new communities. The Cincinnati Turngemeinde, organized on November 21, 1848, is generally credited with being the first Turner society started in the United States. By 1850 Turner societies were operating in Baltimore, Boston, Louisville, New York City, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Richmond, and St. Louis.

1850 also marked the beginning of a national Turner organization. At a convention held in Philadelphia on October 4 and 5, representatives from several Turnvereins agreed to the formation of the *Vereinigte Turnvereins Nordamerika* (United Turner Societies of North America). At a second convention held in Philadelphia in September, 1851, the national organization was renamed *Socialistische Turnerbund von Nord Amerika* (Socialist Turner Federation of North America). The new name symbolized the liberal political outlook of the group at the time.

The Turners and their new national organization quickly became involved in the political turmoil of the 1850s. The influx of German and Irish immigrants into the United States during the 1840s and 1850s sparked the rise of a nativist movement that spawned the American or “Know-Nothing” party (so-called because members of the party would respond, “I know nothing” when asked about their activities). The Know-Nothing Party demanded, among other things, a restriction on the number of immigrants allowed into the United States and a denial of voting rights to foreign-born residents. Violent clashes between members of the Know-Nothing Party and German immigrants (including members of Turner societies) occurred in many cities, especially during elections. By the late 1850s the Know-Nothing Party had waned in influence and the violence ended.

Serious internal conflicts threatened the Turners' national organization during the 1850s. The 1855 national convention passed a resolution making opposition to slavery one of the Turners' principles. Many Turner societies from the South, unwilling to support this measure, withdrew from the national organization. The debate over the slavery issue and friction between the *Vorort* (the national executive committee) and some of the local societies split the Turners into western and eastern factions. Each side conducted its own conventions in 1857 and 1858. Reconciliation took place in 1859, but the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861 disrupted the operations of the Turners on a national level.

The war also diminished Turner activities on the local level. Many northern societies became inactive or even disbanded because so many of their members were serving in the army. Several

regiments were composed wholly or in part of Turners, including the:

- Illinois 9<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, 43<sup>rd</sup>, and 82<sup>nd</sup> regiments
- Indiana 32<sup>nd</sup> regiment
- Kentucky 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> regiments
- Minnesota 2<sup>nd</sup> cavalry regiment
- Missouri 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, and 41<sup>st</sup> regiments
- New York 20<sup>th</sup> (Turner Rifles) regiment
- Ohio 9<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>, 37<sup>th</sup>, 106<sup>th</sup>, and 108<sup>th</sup> regiments
- Pennsylvania 47<sup>th</sup> regiment
- Wisconsin 5<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 26<sup>th</sup> regiments

Efforts to revive the Turners began during the latter part of the war. At the urging of the New York and Baltimore societies, a national convention was held in Washington, D.C. in April, 1865. The convention adopted the new name of *Nordamerikanische Turnerbund* for the organization. (The Turners also used the English translation of the title, North American Gymnastic Union, at times.) Some of the southern Turner societies, such as the New Orleans Turnverein, rejoined the national group, and new Turnvereins were organized in many cities to replace those that had become moribund during the war.

The latter half of the nineteenth century was a period of growth for the Turners. In 1871 the *Nordamerikanische Turnerbund* had a total of 10,200 members in 148 societies. By 1880 the numbers had risen to 13,000 members in 186 societies. 1893 was the highwater mark for the organization; membership stood at nearly 42,000 in 316 societies. The Turners drew new members both from recently arrived immigrants who had belonged to Turner societies in Germany and from the descendants of Turners who had arrived in the United States in the 1840s and 1850s.

The increasing number of Turnvereins in the country created a growing need for instructors to manage the societies' athletic programs and classes. The Turner national conventions of 1856 and 1860 had approved proposals for the creation of a national training school for gymnastic teachers, but neither proposal was acted upon. In 1866 the national convention again passed a resolution calling for the establishment of the school, and this time the school became a reality. The *Turnlehrerseminar* (Gymnastic Teachers Seminary), opened in November, 1866 in New York City. It remained in New York until 1870, then operated in Chicago from 1870 until the catastrophic fire of October, 1871 destroyed the school's building and equipment. The *Turnlehrerseminar* was again based in New York City from 1872 to 1874, then made Milwaukee its home from 1875 to 1889 and from 1891 to 1907. Between 1889 and 1891 the school relocated temporarily to Indianapolis while new facilities for the school were being prepared in Milwaukee. The school made a permanent return to Indianapolis in 1907, and its name was changed to the Normal College of the American Gymnastic Union (N.C.A.G.U.). In 1941, faced with increasing costs, declining enrollment, and the need to offer a broader curriculum, the Normal College board of trustees voted to merge the school with Indiana University. The school is now known as the Indiana University School of Physical Education.

The Turners' interest in fitness and physical education extended beyond their Turnvereins. The 1880 national convention passed a resolution calling on its members to work for the introduction of physical education into the curriculum of the nation's public school systems. The Turners took up the issue with enthusiasm and over the next twenty years enjoyed many successes. Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Denver, Indianapolis, Kansas City, Milwaukee, and St. Louis were among the cities where Turners' lobbying helped convince school boards to add physical education classes. Turner instructors and graduates of the Normal College served as directors of physical education programs in many school systems.

An important tool the Turners have used to promote fitness is the Turnfest. These athletic competitions (now called National Festivals) bring together athletes from Turnvereins all across the United States. The Turnfests took place annually in the years before the Civil War. After the war the games became a biennial event. As the growing number of participants made Turnfests more expensive to stage, the Turners reduced their frequency to once every four years, beginning in the 1880s. Promotional publications for the 1917 Turnfest were issued in 1916, but this Turnfest was canceled due to World War I. No Turnfest was held between 1941 and 1948 due to World War II. Turnfests held between 1889 and 1913 attracted 1,200-3,300 competitors and thousands of spectators, giving non-Turners a look at German-style gymnastics and other events. Cultural competitions held in conjunction with the Turnfests helped Turners maintain a sense of their German heritage.

Events and trends in the twentieth century brought changes to the Turner organization. The start of World War I in 1914 increased tensions between the Turners and other segments of American society. The Turners advocated American neutrality and attacked what they perceived as a pro-British bias in the media. The entry of the United States into the war exacerbated the situation. Faced with growing pressure from the public to prove their loyalty by downplaying their German heritage, the Turners responded by calling their organization the American Gymnastic Union and by issuing annual reports and other publications in English instead of German. Many local Turner societies took similar measures to appease public opinion.

The role of Turner women at the national level became more prominent with the founding of the Women's Auxiliary of the American Turners at the American Turners' convention in Louisville, Kentucky in 1919. The Women's Auxiliary served as a national organization for women's auxiliaries affiliated with local Turner societies. The Women's Auxiliary has engaged in several fund raising and philanthropic activities designed to support work done by the American Turners. Auxiliary efforts have included a Student Loan Fund for students attending the Normal College of the American Gymnastic Union, financial support of the National Health and Physical Education Committee's leaders' course, monetary donations to other Turner causes, and work with groups like the American Red Cross.

The 1920s and 1930s provided more challenges to the Turners. The use of beer and spirits have always played an important part in German and German-American social life, and the inability of Turnvereins to serve these beverages during the Prohibition years caused a loss of income and a decline in membership. The onset of the Depression in the 1930s added to the Turners'

difficulties; many societies closed due to financial problems, and other societies lost their buildings when mortgage payments and maintenance costs became more than their membership could handle.

Rising tensions between the United States and Nazi Germany during the late 1930s and early 1940s affected the Turners. Members of a few Turner societies, primarily in the New York City area, were investigated by government agents for involvement with suspected pro-Nazi organizations, and in 1938 the Turners officially changed their name from the American Turnerbund (the name adopted by the organization when the national headquarters moved to Pittsburgh in 1923) to the American Turners to avoid being confused with a pro-Nazi group, the German-American Bund. Following the entry of the United States into World War II, the Internal Revenue Service revoked the tax-exempt status of the American Turners. As a result of the war and the anti-German sentiment it aroused, the Turners experienced a continuing decline in membership. After the war, the Turners emphasized their social and athletic activities while eliminating calls for specific political reforms from their principles.

The Turners enjoyed a revival in the early post-war years as membership rose to 25,000 by 1950. In that same year the national convention approved changes in the statutes that altered the nature of the chief executive body of the Turners. First called the *Vorort* and later the National Executive Committee, the principal leadership group of the Turners had drawn its members from the Turner societies in the city chosen by the national convention to serve as the home of the national headquarters. A new group of leaders took over each time the national headquarters moved. The changes enacted by the 1950 convention abolished this system. The membership of the new chief executive body, the National Council, would consist of the president, first vice president, second vice president, a representative from each of eight regions, the chairs of the National Health and Physical Education Committee and the National Cultural Education Committee, and the immediate past president. The president and two vice presidents would be elected by the national convention, and the president was limited to two successive two-year terms. Subsequent revisions to the Turner statutes added the chair of the National Bowling Committee and the president of the American Turners National Women's Auxiliary to the National Council and replaced the regional councilors with the district presidents.

The 1960s marked the beginning of another downturn in membership. Restrictions on the ability of high school and college athletes to take part in sports programs not affiliated with their schools hurt many Turner athletic programs. The movement of people from the center of cities (where most Turner societies were located) to the suburbs resulted in many members participating less in Turner activities because of the distance between their homes and the Turnhall. Some societies responded to the situation by relocating to the suburbs, but others chose to disband. National membership dropped to 13,000 in 60 societies by the early 1990s. In spite of these problems, however, the American Turners have maintained their national activities.

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## REFERENCES

Metzner, Henry. *History of the American Turners*. 4<sup>th</sup> rev. ed. Louisville, KY: National Council of the American Turners, 1989.

Pumroy, Eric L., and Katja Rampelmann, comps. *Research Guide to the Turner Movement in the United States*. Bibliographies and Indexes in American History, no. 33. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996.

## RELATED MATERIALS

American Turners Local Societies Collection, Mss 038, Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, University Library, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis.

Athenaeum Turners Records, 1851-1994, Mss 032, Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, University Library, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis.

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URL: <http://www.dtb-online.de>

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Founder's Day 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary video recording (Illinois District Turner Camp). Call number GV224.A1 I322 1994.

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URL: [http://www.gymmedia.com/freyburg/index\\_e.htm](http://www.gymmedia.com/freyburg/index_e.htm)

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## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection documents the activities of the American Turners on a national level, the interactions between the national leadership and the districts and local societies, and the American Turners' relationship with American society in general. The materials offer insights into the topics of ethnicity, assimilation, and physical education and fitness. Many of the pre-World War I records are in German; the handwritten records from this period are often in old German script, and the printed records are in a Gothic typeface. The collection is of limited use for genealogical research.

The collection has been divided into the following series: National Council Records, Conventions, Financial, Membership, Turner Groups, Women's Auxiliary, History, Sporting Events, Publications, Districts, German Turners, Related Organizations, Photographs, and Audio-Visual Materials. Audiovisual materials are listed both in the appropriate series and in audiovisual inventories at the end of the series list. Photographs are listed both in the appropriate series and searchable online.

**National Council Records, 1853-1998**, contain the records of the National Council, the chief executive body of the American Turners, and of the national office, which under the direction of the national secretary oversees the day-to-day operations of the national organization.

Annual reports, 1871-1917, 1919-1966, summarize the activities and status of the American Turners. The reports typically include a report by the national president, a financial statement from the national treasurer, reports from the national committees, membership statistics for all societies belonging to the American Turners, and information from the Normal College. The reports are in German through 1919. The years 1872-1879 and 1881-1883 have only the treasurer's statement from the annual report. The last annual report was published in 1966.

The National Council minutes, 1858-1993, document the discussions and decisions of the leadership group in its meetings. The minutes are handwritten in German through 1937, although contemporary script was often used instead of the old German script. The minutes are typed or printed in English after 1937. The minutes are complete for the years 1858-1993 except for 1938, 1940, and 1957-1962.

Council correspondence provides an understanding of the activities of the administrative body and the national office and of the issues, both internal and external, that concerned the American Turners. Among the external issues are German-American support for the Boers in their war against the British in South Africa at the beginning of the twentieth century (including an offer by the American Turners to Clara Barton of the American Red Cross to sponsor an ambulance unit to assist Boer civilians), efforts to send food to Germany after World War I, and whether

local Turner societies were subject to the provisions of the Social Security Act, especially in regards to the societies' instructors. Internal issues include the continuing efforts by the national office to collect the per capita membership payments from local societies and decisions by local societies to disband or to withdraw from the American Turners. The correspondence is divided into three sections: chronological, subject, and societies. The chronological correspondence is filed by date. Much of the correspondence from the years before World War I is handwritten in German. The subject correspondence is filed alphabetically by topic. Much of this correspondence is with members of the National Council or of the national committees. Most of the letters are in English. The correspondence with individual societies is filed alphabetically by state and then city. Most of these letters are in English.

National secretary Emil L. Pletz and his successor, Dr. E. A. Eklund, published a newsletter, 1939-1956, that was sent to officers of local Turner societies. The items in the newsletter kept local societies informed about the activities of the national office and other Turner societies and reminded local officers of duties they needed to fulfill, such as submitting annual statistical reports to the national office.

The photographs of individuals are mostly head and shoulder portraits of people who have served on the National Council or on national committees. These photographs are arranged alphabetically by last name. Most of the photographs of groups show several members of the National Council or of national committees together. A few of the group photographs are of events or activities. The two photographs of the *Vorort* (the original name of the National Council) are oversized and show the members of the *Vorort* when the national office was in Indianapolis.

Records from various national committees are included in the series. These files include correspondence, minutes, and other materials relating to the activities of the National Bowling Committee, the National Committee for Complaints and Appeals, the National Cultural Education Committee, the National Health and Physical Education Committee, the National Legal Committee, the National Publicity and Membership Committee, the Round Table Conference, and the Youth Committee. Some of the committee records are for only a few years while others cover several decades. The committees help shape the Turners' national policy, direct national activities, and serve as a link between the national leadership and the districts and local societies. The Health and Physical Education Committee and the Cultural Education Committee have played especially prominent roles in this area. The Health and Physical Education Committee establishes regulations and guidelines for Turnfests and other national sporting events and has conducted meetings and classes for instructors from Turner societies. The Cultural Education Committee supervises cultural competitions held in conjunction with Turnfests and encourages local societies to conduct cultural education activities, such as lectures, to make Turner societies places for intellectual as well as physical development.

Other records in this series include files relating to projects sponsored by the National Council and copies of the American Turners' bylaws and statutes.

**Convention Records, 1854-2000**, contain minutes, reports, publications, correspondence, and photographs from the meetings of the American Turners' principal legislative body. The conventions elect the national president and two vice presidents, select the location of the next National Festival, approve changes in the principles and statutes, and establish the general policies that are implemented by the National Council. The conventions met annually from 1850 to 1860, then biennially beginning in 1866. No convention was held during World War I. There are minutes for all of the conventions. The minutes are in German through 1921, but English translations prepared by Henry W. Kumpf in the 1940s are included for the conventions from 1854 to 1872. Reports from convention committees, correspondence (much of it dealing with resolutions to be voted on by the conventions), and programs and other souvenir publications are available for several of the conventions. These records, like the minutes, are generally in German prior to 1921.

**Financial Records, 1866-1998**, contain financial records, correspondence and reports relating to the general finances of the American Turners and to special funds administered by the organization. The materials in this series are especially strong for the years after World War II. The data from this series and from the treasurer's reports included in the annual reports provide a good financial history of the organization from the 1860s to the 1990s.

**Membership Records, 1883-1999**, contain society charters, statistical reports from individual societies, directories of Turner societies and their leaders, membership lists from some societies submitted to the national headquarters, information about withdrawn or dissolved societies, lists of expelled members and individuals honored for 40- or 50-year membership in the Turners, and information on membership drives and inductions. The records in this series are useful in tracking the growth and decline of the American Turners through changes in the number of active societies and dues-paying members.

**Turner Groups Records, 1930-1943**, contain a copy of the principles and statutes of the American Boy Turners and correspondence, membership applications, and dues records from the Turner Pioneers. The American Boy Turners, established by the national convention in 1933, was an organization for boys ages 10-18. The group offered athletic, educational, and social activities to its members. The Turner Pioneers, organized in 1930, was for Turners age 40 and over. The group's objectives were to work within their Turner societies to strengthen the educational and athletic programs, recruit new members for Turner societies, and defend Turner principles and ideals to the general public.

**Women's Auxiliary Records, 1931-1990**, contain convention minutes, reports, resolutions, copies of the constitution and bylaws, newsletters, rosters of Auxiliary leaders on the national and society level, newsletters, and correspondence. The Women's Auxiliary of the American Turners, organized at the American Turners' convention in Louisville, Kentucky in 1919, ties together auxiliaries affiliated with local Turner societies. The Women's Auxiliary has engaged in several fund raising and philanthropic activities. Auxiliary efforts have included a Student Loan Fund for students attending the Normal College of the American Gymnastic Union,

financial support of the National Health and Physical Education Committee's leaders' course, monetary donations to other Turner causes, and work with groups like the American Red Cross. The president of the Women's Auxiliary of the American Turners has served on the National Council since 1961.

**History Records, 1893-2002**, contain articles, theses, correspondence, and other materials relating to the history of the American Turners. The decision to change the organization's name to the American Turners in 1938 sparked sharp debate among members. The series contains correspondence about the name change and referendum vote tallies from several societies. The articles and theses cover primarily the influence of the Turners in specific geographic regions (such as Missouri) and in the field of physical education. The materials about the president of the American Turners are writings of and articles about the two men who had the longest terms in the office, George Seibel (1923-1937) and Carl Weideman (1937-1952). Correspondence about Turner Day at the New York World's Fair in 1939 illustrates the Turners' efforts at promoting both the organization and physical fitness. Correspondence and newspaper clippings document the impact of World War II on the Turners. Many of these files concern the involvement of a few Turner societies, primarily in the New York City area, with pro-Nazi German-American groups. Turner anniversaries are the subject of files relating to a Turner postage stamp issued by the U.S. Postal Service in 1948 to celebrate the centennial anniversary of the founding of the first Turnverein in the United States, a commemorative seal issued by the American Turners in 1958, and a resolution passed by the Illinois State Senate in 1993.

**Sporting Events Records, 1885-1995**, contain records from Turnfests and other national sporting events. Turnfest records include results of the competition, correspondence, descriptions of mass exercises, programs and other promotional publications, and photographs. The records from the other national sporting events contain similar materials. The sports involved in these events include badminton, basketball, bowling, golf, gymnastics, softball, swimming, tennis, track and field, and volleyball. The records in this series show the variety of athletic activities Turners are involved in on the national level.

**Publications, 1870-2004**, contain copies of *American Turner Topics*, the national newsletter published by the American Turners since 1936. *American Turner Topics* includes items about the activities of Turner districts and societies, reports on conventions, Turnfests, and other national events, and a column by the national president. The series does not have a complete run, having no issues from 1960-1962 and missing issues from other years.

Turner promotional materials printed for the general public and songbooks, yearbooks, guidelines, and educational publications for members are in the series. Some of the publications are in German. The promotional materials offer examples of the Turners' public relations activities through much of the twentieth century and illustrate their efforts to create a positive image in the minds of non-Turners, especially during the 1930s and 1940s.

**Districts Records, 1869-1994**, contain district convention minutes, publications, photographs, histories, and correspondence between the national office and the districts. Some of the

convention minutes are in German. Districts are geographical groupings of Turner societies established by the national leadership to promote cooperation among societies and to enhance the efficiency of the Turner organizational structure. A district may encompass portions of several states or only part of one state. Societies within a district meet to discuss mutual problems and issues and to conduct district athletic and social events. District conventions often issue resolutions for consideration at the national convention, and district presidents have served as members of the National Council since 1992. A total of 48 districts have existed at various times, and the collection has records from 25 of those districts. The most extensive set is from the Central States District, which currently includes the Turner societies in Indiana, Kentucky, and western Ohio. Records for this district include an incomplete run of convention minutes from 1880-1987, minutes and correspondence relating to the meetings of the district officers in the 1970s and 1980s, and records relating to the district's social and athletic activities from the 1930s-1980s.

**German Turners Records, 1844-1991**, contain publications published by or relating to Turners in Germany, correspondence from German Turner societies to the American Turners, photographs, and information about and films of Turnfests held in Germany. Many of the publications are in German. While the American Turners and the Deutsche Turnerschaft are separate organizations, the two groups have maintained a relationship. Teams from Germany have come to the United States to compete in the national Turnfests of the American Turners, and many Americans have participated in or observed German Turnfests. Some German Turner societies wrote to the American Turners after World War II, seeking assistance in rebuilding their organizations.

**Related Organizations Records, 1886-1978**, contain correspondence, meeting minutes, and newsletters from organizations (primarily athletic) with which the American Turners have had connections.

The American Athletic Union (AAU) records include the articles of alliance that set out the relationship between the American Turners and AAU and event records that highlight the involvement of Turners both as athletes and as judges, supervisors, and sponsors in AAU athletic events.

The Freidenker Vereine (Freethinker Societies) records contain publications. Many members of the American Turners were actively involved in Freethinker societies; e.g., Max Hempel, who served as national secretary of the American Turners during the 1890s, wrote many of the articles that appear in the publications. The participation of Turners in Freethinker societies reflects the liberal attitudes of the Turners during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The German-American Gymnastic Committee was incorporated on April 23, 1957, and many of the officers were members of the American Turners. The file contains promotional materials and reports relating to a 1958 tour of the West German gymnastics teams sponsored by the committee. Turner societies hosted many of the tour's performances.

The United States Olympic Gymnastic Committee file includes correspondence, meeting minutes, and photographs. The American Turners had a representative on the committee, and Roy E. Moore, chairman of the committee from 1920 to 1957, was a member of the American Turners. Most of the members of the U.S. Olympic men's and women's gymnastic teams for 1948, 1952, and 1956 were either members of the American Turners or trained at Turner societies.

The United States Volleyball Association (USVBA) file contains correspondence and meeting minutes. The American Turners had representatives on the USVBA board during the period covered by the records.

**Photographs, 1890-1991**, cover primarily individuals who served in national leadership roles, national committees, national sporting events, district activities, activities of the German Turners, and the U.S. Olympic gymnastic teams of the 1940s and 1950s that were composed mainly of Turner members. Many of the photographs originally appeared in the *American Turner Topics*.

**Audio-Visual Materials, 1933-1995**, include 16mm films from the German Turnfests of 1933, 1968, and 1973 and a video made to promote the 1995 Turnfest held in South Bend, Indiana. This video includes historic film footage of various German Turnfests and of American Turnfests held in 1948 and 1991 and scenes of the South Bend Turners facilities and the sites at the University of Notre Dame where the 1995 competition was held.

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