

German American History

GERMAN SINGING SOCIETIES

Vocal music, introduced so effectually by the German sectarians of the 18th century, found great stimulation through the efforts of the political refugees of the period 1820 to 1848. Among these high-spirited heroes of an unsuccessful revolution there were many musicians, enthusiastic followers of their art. Disappointed by the monotony of American life, these men banded together and formed, for their own entertainment, singing societies, in which they cultivated the inspiring songs of liberty, written by Uhland, Herwegh, Freiligrath, Hoffmann von Fallersleben, Lenau and other great German poets.

The first of such singing societies was the Philadelphia Mannerchor, founded in 1835. The next was the Baltimore Liederkrantz (1836), followed in 1838 by the Deutsche Gesangverein von Cincinnati; in 1844 the Philadelphia Liedertafel was born, in 1847 the Deutsche Liederkrantz von New York and in 1853 the Delaware Sangerbund and Library Association.

The first Saengerfest was held in June 1849 in Cincinnati and resulted in the founding of the Deutsche Sangerbund von Nordamerika. Two days were devoted to concerts; on the third day all members, more than one thousand, went in richly decorated steamers up the Ohio River to the romantic Bald Hill, where Sunday was spent with singing and all kinds of entertainments.

Since then the increase of such societies has been enormous. To-day there is hardly any city with a German population, that has not its singing societies.

Occasional visits of one society to others led to the formation of unions for the purpose of holding regular singing festivals with a competition for valuable prizes. Among these prizes have been some donated by the German and Austrian Emperors and it was due to the competition for these trophies of high artistic value, that some of these festivals became events of extraordinary magnitude. There have been such festivals, in which several thousand active singers took part, as for instance in July 1900 in Brooklyn, which was visited by 174 societies with more than 6000 singers.

At present we have the Nordostliche Saengerbund, the Deutsch Texanische Saengerbund, the Nordwestliche Sangerbund, the Pacific Saengerbund and the Nord Pacific Saengerbund

These German American Saengerbunde can point with great pride to the work of culture accomplished by them and can say indeed that no other societies have in like manner contributed to the elevation and advancement of the population of our country.

German Singing Societies of America presented by

GERMAN-AMERICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

Philadelphia Chapter