

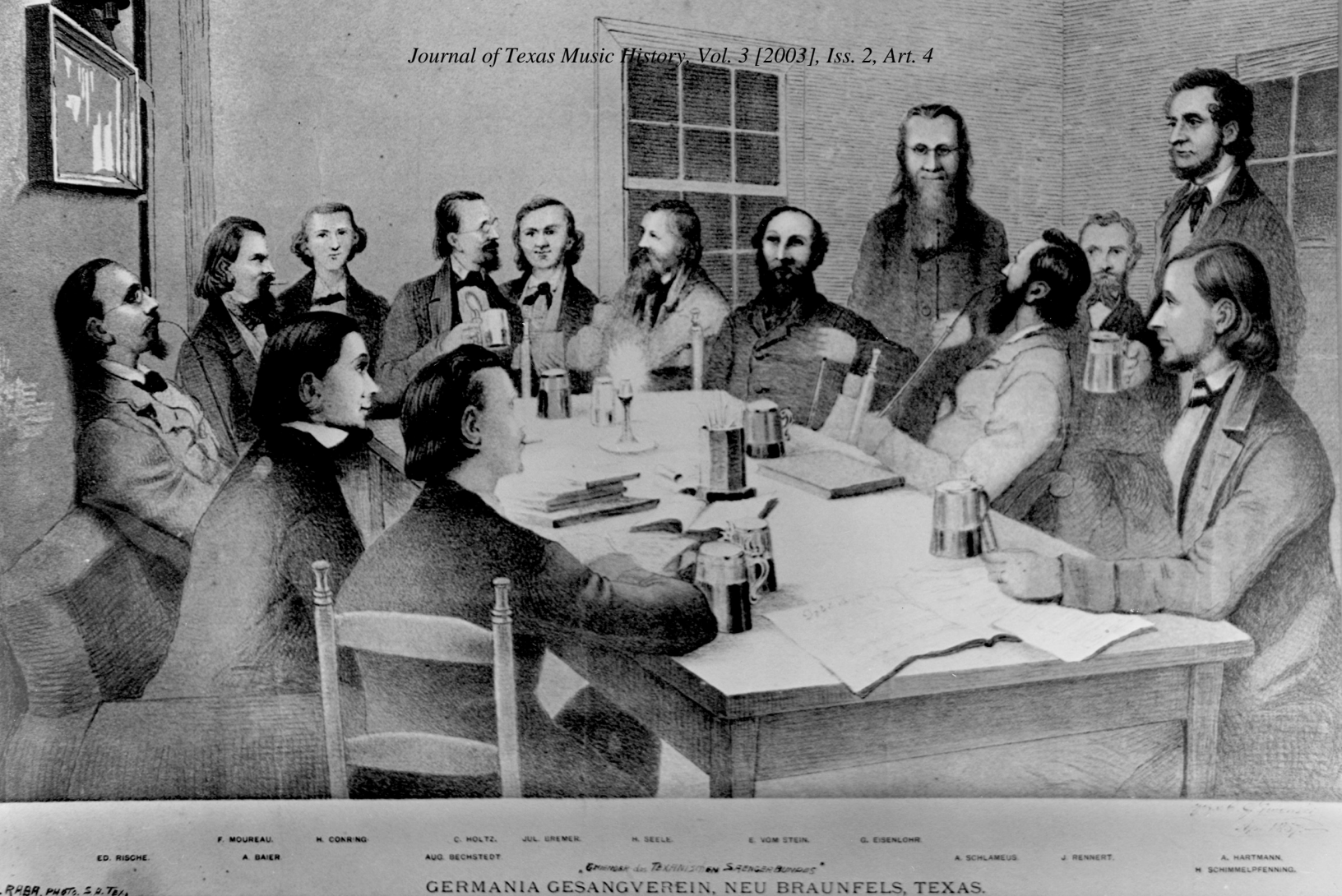
Celebrating "Das Deutsche Lied" in



Druck der "Freie Presse fuer Texas"

Ad from the 49th Annual Singing Festival of the Texas Hill Country Singers' League commemorating the Texas Centennial 1836-1936.
Courtesy of Beethoven Maennerchor Archives

Towards the end of the Republic of Texas and in the early days of statehood, German settlers began arriving at the Ports of Galveston and Indianola. They were coming to Texas largely because of promises made to them for a better political and economic life by the Society for the Protection of German Immigrants in Texas, the Adelsverein. The Adelsverein was an organization formed in 1842 by German noblemen who wanted to create prosperous new settlements in what is now central Texas.¹ The first group of German settlers to arrive under the auspices of the Adelsverein was led by Prince Carl of Solms-Braunfels. On March 21, 1845, the Adelsverein established its first community in central Texas and named it "New Braunfels" in honor of the Prince's estate



Painting of Germania Gesangverein Neu Braunfels, Texas, courtesy of RABA Studio and Beethoven Maennerchor Archives

The first year in the new homeland was tenuous. Original plans made by the *Adelsverein* for the settlers provisions and welfare had not worked out as hoped. Money was short, provisions were scarce and housing was rather primitive, because of the limited availability of good building materials. Disease took its toll. Prince Solms-Braunfels eventually returned to Europe leaving these settlers to fend for themselves. Baron Ottfried Hans Freiherr von Meusebach (John O. Meusebach) stepped in to provide leadership and help make the settlements safe and secure.³ Due to the determination and steadfastness of these early settlers and under the capable leadership of Meusebach, the German communities soon prospered. As they flourished, new settlements began springing up further out into the countryside. Communities such as Fredericksburg, Comfort, Kerrville, Sisterdale, Bettina, Twin Sisters, and Boerne were established. Despite the success of these fledgling settlements, some, such as Fredericksburg, were plagued by on-going clashes with nearby Indian groups. In May 1847, Meusebach and a group of men, including Major Robert S. Neighbors, Indian Agent for the State of Texas, traveled to Fredericksburg and signed a peace treaty with local Comanches, which helped ensure the safety of the settlers from attacks.⁴

The Germans who came to Texas were, for the most part, well educated. They traveled to Texas in cohesive family groups and brought their German culture largely intact with them. Music, athletics, and shooting clubs had been a mainstay of their social life in Europe. After the first order of getting established in Texas

with a reliable food supply and new homes, the settlers had time to channel their energies into developing these esteemed pastimes. "Das Deutsche Lied," or "the German song," was central to family and community celebrations, and singing societies quickly began to appear in nearly every German settlement.

In *A Chronological History of the Singers of German Songs in Texas*, Oscar Haas describes the founding of the various community singing societies and details the highlights of their individual festivals. His book is an invaluable resource for documenting the formation and development of these organizations. Haas shows that the early years of these singing societies, especially before 1900, were the most critical in terms of shaping the identity, structure, and procedures of each individual group, and that the festivals after 1900 mainly followed the precedents set earlier in the nineteenth century.⁵

Since New Braunfels was one of the earliest German settlements in the new state, it was also the first to organize its own singing society and to hold the very first festival. The "Germania" singing society was established in New Braunfels on March 2, 1850, and its members soon held the state's very first singing festival, or *Sängerfest*, at Herman Seele's place known as "Elisenruhe," on the Guadalupe River. "Land was cleared for dancing and a wagon canvas was used for a roof. Tables and benches were placed in an arbor. French wine, coffee, and pastries were available." Singers from Austin and San Antonio also came to participate. Following the success of this first *Sängerfest*, Seele built the New Braunfels

Sängerhalle on his property in 1855.⁶

The earliest Sängersfests, however, not only reflected the immigrants' abiding love of German music, they also were an opportunity for *Gemütlichkeit* (fellowship), since they allowed the early settlers who lived in the more remote countryside to come together in a large group. These festivals served as an important forum for community and political interaction. The minutes from some of the festivals indicate that politics played an important part in the settlers' lives, and they often incorporated political discussions into their business meetings held during the festivals. One such meeting took place at a singing festival in May 1854 in San Antonio. Societies from Austin, La Grange, New Braunfels, Sisterdale, and San Antonio participated. On the last day of this Sängersfest, a German convention was held at "Vauxhall Garden" on Alamo Street in San Antonio. Certain political economists and idealists from Sisterdale proposed that attendees vote on a resolution that would abolish capital punishment, forbid speculation in land values, and declare slavery to be a "monstrous social wrong that should be abolished in conformity with the Constitution of the United States which declared in emphatic terms that 'all men are born free.'"⁷

As singing societies grew in number, certain clubs banded together to form leagues, including the West-Texas Hill Singers League, the Guadalupe Valley Singers League, and years later, the Comal Singers League. Eventually, these leagues joined together to form a state league—the Deutsch-Texanischer Sängerbund (German-Texas Singers League.) The smaller leagues held their own individual singing festivals and then joined together to hold an annual state song festival.

Travel to and from local and state song festivals was often difficult. Roads could be in poor condition or even impassable, and there was the ever-present danger of Indian attacks, especially in the earlier years. In 1875, the constant threat of confrontation with Indians from "the West to Comfort" prompted singers to form a scout company, which patrolled the area once a month. On August 10, 1875, the anniversary of the Battle of the Nueces from the Texas War for Independence, these riders were camped on the ground at which this battle had been fought. Among their group were "survivors of the battle" and "brothers of the fallen." As they paused to remember the battle, they sang Silcher's *Bardic Chorus* as a solemn tribute to their fallen comrades.⁸

In the early 1850s, German immigrants from New Braunfels, as well as those arriving directly from Europe at Indianola and Galveston, began moving increasingly into San Antonio—eventually becoming a major segment of the city's population. One such early immigrant to the Alamo City was Wilhelm Ludwig August Tampke, who came to Texas from Wolfenbüttel, Braunschweig, in 1853 and settled for a time in the downtown San Antonio area. Tampke was a circuit Methodist preacher who lived near the Alamo and also served as a volunteer fireman for the city. Because music played such an integral part in the lives of these early immigrants, it was only natural that Tampke would pay tribute to his fellow firemen by writing his "Fireman's Song" in 1871. Following is the English translation of his original song:

"Fireman's Song"

*In depth and the height
I'm often there in sight
The aid of ev'ry man
At fire with engine there
Of saving man's welfare
I am a fireman.*

*In ev'ry kind of weather
I haste with hook and ladder
On roofs as high as I can
The buildings, lives and ware
To save I only care
I am a fireman!*

*Is there an engine trial
I dare not wait awhile
I must be punctual then
Prepared for any hour
The engine shows her power.
I am a fireman!*

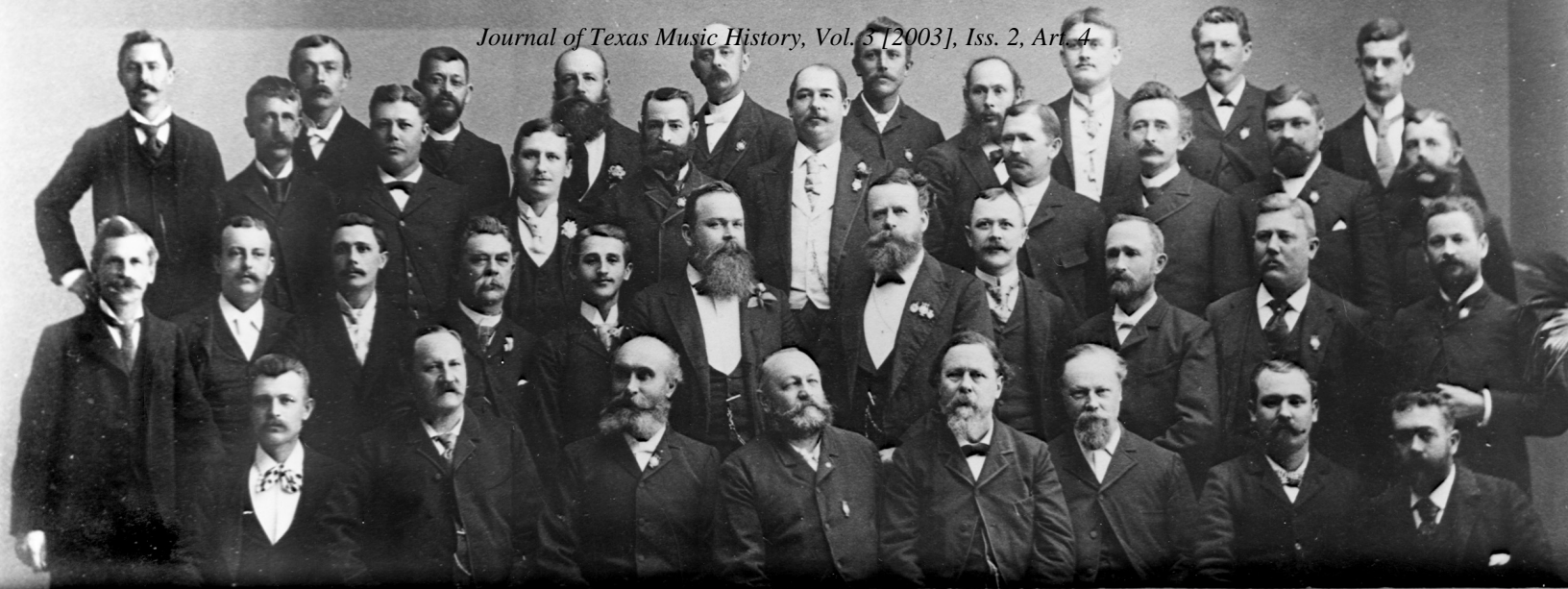
*When I am proper drilled
My mission have fulfilled
I'll be respected then
In uniform by going
In joy and distress showing
I am a fireman!*

*I'm cleaving to the banner
Marching in upright manner
Wherever I began.
The flag's ensign, inscription
Gives me the plain description
I am a fireman!*

*Now home, I dare rejoice
At New Hall, as my choice
With music Chief and men.
This day might be a Blessing
To all I am addressing.
I am a fireman!*

San Antonio, February 22, 1871
A. Tampke.⁹

San Antonio's early German culture was steeped in the arts and music. The city was also fortunate to have had two notable German singing societies by the late nineteenth century. One of the very first singing societies to form in San Antonio was the Männergesang-Verein, founded by Johann Nicholas Simon Menger in July 1847. This group held its rehearsals at the San Antonio Casino Club. Beginning in 1853, Adolf Douai, publisher of the German-language *San Antonio Zeitung*, served as



J. M'ALLISTER, JOS. KURTZ, F. M. HALBEDL, F. HENSEL, F. C. KLIEFOTH, WM. DAEHNERT, E. A. TIPS, E. ENGELKE, W. WILKENS,
CASSIRER, BIBLIOTH,
CHAS. HORN, E. STEVES, ALEX ENGELHARDT, M. SUTOR, CARL BECK, S. E. JACOBSON, F. NAGEL, R. SEBBE, WM. M'ALLISTER,
DIRIGENT.
O. STAFFEL, DR. EG. MOECKEL, L. DREISS, F. HERFF, C. H. MUELLER, HY. CLEMENS, A. STEVES, A. LIGHTNER,
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F. G. WANISZLAEBEN, A. WAHLSTAB, E. RABA, H. DREISS, C. FREY, C. A. R. CAMPBELL
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SEC'Y.

ACTIVE MITGLIEDER DES BEETHOVEN MAENNERCHORS, DECEMBER 25, 1893.

Photo of Active Mitglieder Des Beethoven Maennerchors, December 25, 1893. Courtesy of RABA Studio and Beethoven Maennerchor Archives

director of the Männergesang-Verein until W. C. A. Thielepape (who eventually served as San Antonio's mayor from 1867 to 1872) took over as president on October 16, 1854.¹⁰ The Männergesang-Verein reorganized on February 24, 1867, and was renamed the "Beethoven Männerchor."¹¹ In 1895, members of the Männerchor built their first concert hall, the Beethoven Hall, in the heart of San Antonio across from La Villita. In 1913, a fire destroyed the concert hall, but it was rebuilt in 1914. The Beethoven Hall still stands in Hemisfair Plaza and is presently owned by the City of San Antonio.¹² In 1920, the Beethoven Männerchor moved to its present location in the King William Historic District of San Antonio.¹³

Sidney Lanier, proclaimed poet and musician of the late-nineteenth century, visited San Antonio in 1873. Lanier was invited to attend a Männerchor rehearsal by his friend, Andreas Schiedemantel (then Beethoven President), on January 30. In a letter regarding his experience with the Männerchor, Lanier describes what might well have been a typical rehearsal in those early days:

Last night at 8 o'clock came Mr. Schiedemantel, a genuine lover of music and a fine pianist, to take me to the Maennerchor, which meets every Wednesday night for practice ... Presently seventeen Germans were seated at the singing table. Great pipes were all afire. The leader, Herr Thielepape, an old man with a white beard and mustache, formerly mayor of the city, rapped his tuning fork vigorously, gave the chords by arpeggios of his voice (a wonderful high tenor ...) and off they all swung into such a noble, noble old full-voice *lied* [song] that imperious tears rushed to my eyes.¹⁴

The second singing society to form in San Antonio before 1900 was the San Antonio Liederkrantz, founded in 1892 by Reverend Henry Pfefferkorn, pastor of St. Joseph's Church on Commerce Street in downtown San Antonio. He served as the choir's director for the first five months of its existence. St. Joseph's Church was built specifically for the German Catholics in San Antonio so that masses could be conducted in their native tongue. The first rehearsals for the choir were held at the parish priest's home. A few months later, the rehearsals were moved to St. Joseph's Society Halle.¹⁵ Pfefferkorn was also an artist and his paintings of the Stations of the Cross, the Ascension, and the Assumption still hang in the church today.

Following Pfefferkorn's tenure as choir director for the Liederkrantz, Otto Hilgers took over on December 19, 1892. Hilgers served as director from 1892 to 1934, and he brought the Liederkrantz to regional prominence by having the choir perform "oratorios, theater performances, minstrel shows and 'Komik' operetta" at a variety of Catholic and Protestant services and events throughout the state.¹⁶

The third director of the Liederkrantz was Professor Bernhard Kalthoff, who served from 1934 to 1975. Kalthoff, who arrived in the United States in 1925, had studied in Europe with Professor Fritz Volbach, a well-known German conductor. Kalthoff played with Fort Sam Houston's 23rd Infantry Band and directed the San Antonio Liederkrantz, the Salatrillo Liederkrantz of Converse, Texas, the Hermann Sons Mixed Chorus, and the Fortschritt Bulverde.¹⁷

Colonel Wayne D. Marty began serving as director of the Liederkrantz in 1975 following Kalthoff. Under Marty's direction between 1975 and 1992, the Liederkrantz grew from 20 members

to approximately 100.¹⁸ Dr. Paul Gottschalk succeeded Marty as director and served until 1999. In January 2000, Thomas E. Ewing took over and is still directing the Liederkrantz. Janine Gittinger Parker, who served as accompanist to the Liederkrantz for many years, was an accomplished pianist and accordionist whose talents added to the success of the choir's performances.¹⁹

Some of the more notable early performances of the San Antonio Liederkrantz include: the opening of the National Convention of the Catholic Central Verein of America in 1920; the Bicentennial Celebration of the Founding of San Antonio attended by Cardinal Hayes in 1931; the 100th Year Remembrance of the Fall of the Alamo in 1936; the Texas Independence Day Field Mass at Washington-on-the-Brazos State Park in 1938; and, fifty years later, the group's largest concert of all, which involved performing songs for 100,000 people attending the mass celebrated by Pope John Paul II in San Antonio.²⁰ In 1995, the San Antonio Liederkrantz performed in Germany at Sulz am Neckar, Dresden/Altenberg, Koblenz, and Wiesbaden. The Liederkrantz remains a vital and active part of San Antonio's musical culture. It regularly performs for the congregation at St. Joseph's Church during its "Fourth Sunday Services" each month. In 2002, the Liederkrantz held a very successful "Patriotic Concert in conjunction with the Hermann Sons German Band." On June 1, 2003, the choir performed a "Sacred Concert" at Laurel Heights Methodist Church in San Antonio.²¹

Before 1900, the city of Galveston also had its own singing society and celebrated with one of the most grandiose concerts of that time. Haas describes the elaborate celebrations of the annual state Sängersfests. The 13th Annual State Song Festival, held in Galveston from May 18-22, 1881, was just such an auspicious occasion. Extensive preparations included building a pavilion capable of seating 5,800 concert goers on the beach. The festival lasted five days, instead of the usual three. The program for that first year involved an official reception at the Union Depot with a torchlight procession to the Artillery Hall and a welcome by the Mayor, followed over the next few days by parades, rehearsals, an oyster roast, and a fish chowder dinner. Additional activities included a grand concert followed by a dance with a procession of all the singing societies, participation by the fire department and military companies, an afternoon picnic and orchestra concert in Schmidt's Garden, an excursion over the waters of the bay and Gulf of Mexico, with a reception and promenade concert at the Garden Club, and, on the final night, the Grand Kommers banquet.²²

Another prominent singing society founded before 1900 was the Austin Männerchor, formed in Austin in 1852. By invitation from the New Braunfels Germania Choir, the Austin Männerchor traveled to New Braunfels in 1853 for the first Sängersfest in Texas. As a special gesture, the wives of the Männerchor singers embroidered a commemorative banner that was presented to the newly organized Deutsch Texanischer Sängerbund (German-Texan Singers League). The banner stayed in that organization's possession until 1957, when it was donated to a museum in Austin.²³

Following the Civil War, the younger men from the Austin Männerchor formed the Austin Sängerrunde and chose William Besserer as director. With great energy and enthusiasm, these members began plans for the 1879 Sängersfest to be held in Austin. This was to be one of the biggest and most celebrated Sängersfests in the history of German music in Texas. On February 8, 1879, in a bookstore on Congress Avenue belonging to the choir's Secretary, C. F. Rumpel, the Austin Sängerrunde was officially formed. The name "Sängerrunde," or "singing circle," came from the songbook used by the group at that time.²⁴

To celebrate the founding of this new organization (consisting of both a men's chorus and a women's chorus), members held a banquet on February 10, 1879. Miss A. Buaas delivered the keynote address describing the "historical development" and "purpose" of the Sängerrunde. The new organization also began preparations to participate in the 25th Anniversary of the Deutsch Texanischer Sängerbund.²⁵ This grand 25th Jubilee Celebration of the State Singers' League was held in Austin beginning on April 16, 1879. As visitors entered the city, booming cannons heralded the start of the three-day festivities. The singing societies that took part in the festival included the Beethoven Männerchor from San Antonio, the Männerchor from New Braunfels, the Salamander from Galveston, the Sängerrunde and the Mixed Chorus from Austin, two delegates from Houston, Comfort, and La Grange, the Frohsinn Singing Society from Dallas, and the Germania from Brenham (the first time the latter two clubs had appeared).

The singers from Dallas, Brenham, and Galveston traveled by train, while those from San Antonio and New Braunfels arrived on 16 wagons. The entire festival committee rode out in their gala coaches three miles south of the city in order to meet the wagons and accompany the guests back into Austin. Two immense arches of honor had been erected—one at the foot of Congress Avenue, the other at the Opera House where the official concert was held. Congress Avenue from the Colorado River to the Capitol was ornately decorated with flags and bunting. At the Colorado River, festival participants unfurled banners representing the various societies and then marched up Congress Avenue to the Opera House.²⁶

Austin's ethnic German community held other festivals of this magnitude in 1889, 1900, and 1911. Partly because of widespread anti-German sentiment following World War I, Austin held a more "subdued" festival in 1922. However, in 1938, participants organized a "spectacular" festival at Camp Mabry in Austin with concerts at Gregory Gymnasium on the University of Texas campus. Nearly 1,000 people attended the banquet (Kommers) at Camp Mabry.²⁷

Eventually, members of the Sängerrunde formed an orchestra, which became "the start of the present Austin Symphony Orchestra." Musical directors throughout the years included William Besserer, Jermann Pfaefflin, Walter Tips, Christian Klaerner, and Hermann M. Bohn. One of the more notable concerts took place in 1963, with Hermann M. Bohn conducting the men's chorus and orchestra in a performance of Podbertsky's "Friedrich Rothbart."²⁸

Other German-Texan singing societies also existed in Austin during the 1800s. Aside from the Austin Männerchor and the Austin Sängerrunde, the largest singing society was a mixed chorus known as the "Austin Musical Union," which included about 100 members and was directed by Walter Tips. Another group, the "Immerlustig Society" also was part of the early Austin music scene, but it merged with the Sängerrunde on March 29, 1887. The Sängerrunde held some of its first singing practices in Horst's pasture, near the present-day intersection of Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and Red River Street. The club then moved to Jacoby's Garden on Lavaca and 15th streets. When conditions there became too crowded, Turner Hall was

the singers from Glückstadt came to Texas for the first time. Sängerrunde members returned the visit to Germany in 1968 and again in 1975. Glückstadt members made another trip to Austin in 1971 and then returned in 1979 to help celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Sängerrunde, as well as the 125th anniversary of the Deutsch Texanischer Sängerbund.³²

To date, the Austin Sängerrunde Männerchor, Damenchor, and newly formed Kinderchor (children's choir) continue as integral parts of Austin's social and cultural scene. The old Scholz Garten and adjoining Sängerrundehalle in downtown Austin are still the home of this organization. Under the capable leadership of Theodore Zoch, who has served as President since 1984, and

Partly because of widespread anti-German sentiment following World War I, Austin held a more "subdued" festival in 1922.

used. Then in 1901, the Sängerrunde moved to Scholz Garten, a German restaurant and beer hall established in 1866 on San Jacinto Street, where it still meets to this day.²⁹

In 1895, six years before it officially relocated to Scholz Garten, the Sängerrunde entered into an agreement to sublease the bowling alleys located next to the restaurant's beer garden. With members now able to access the bowling alleys and enjoy Sunday concerts held at Scholz Garten, membership in the organization increased quickly by 1907 to 167 members with 34 active singers. By 1947, membership had grown to 235 and has consistently remained near that level. The choir obtained a state charter on May 1, 1903. The Sängerrunde's principal activities were banquets, concerts with choral singing, solo artists, chamber music ensembles, comedy, speeches, and always "dancing at the end."³⁰

In February 1959, Hermann M. Bohn organized a women's chorus known as the "Austin Sängerrunde Damenchor," which gave its first performance at the 80th anniversary of the men's Sängerrunde. Unlike the first women's chorus that evolved into a women's auxiliary for the club, this organization has remained a vital component of the Sängerrunde's musical performances for over 44 years and consistently averages an annual membership of around 25 singers.³¹

The Austin Sängerrunde also has been active in promoting cultural exchange between the United States and Germany. During a visit to his hometown of Glückstadt, Germany in 1905, Sängerrunde member, Wilhelm Bohn, laid the groundwork for future visits to Texas from the German musical group "Quartett Lied Hoch," of which he became an honorary member. This early relationship helped lead to future cooperation in other ways, as well. For example, after World War II, the Austin Sängerrunde assisted the city of Glückstadt by sending warm clothes from the University of Texas Athletic Department for German war refugees. Through visits back and forth over the years, the members decided that these two organizations should come together for an official visit in Austin. In the fall of 1966,

with the assistance of Hans J. Mueller, the club's Secretary since 1985, the Austin Sängerrunde is thriving.³³ Members continue to hold weekly rehearsals and take part in the yearly Sängerbund as they have since the club's inception in 1879.³⁴

The Dallas Frohsinn was established soon after the Dallas Turnverein advertised in the *Texas Volksblatt* for interested persons to attend a meeting of the German Singing Society on Sunday, March 25, 1877. The newly organized Frohsinn participated in its first Maifest, or May festival, sponsored by the Dallas Turnverein on May 6-7, 1877. The original Frohsinn was actually made up of ethnic Germans and Austrians, as well as members of an old, inactive Swiss singing society. Professor Bauer served as the first Director of the Frohsinn, with Henry Boll acting as President and John E. Hess as Secretary.³⁵

The Frohsinn's first concert was held in conjunction with a theater performance and ball on December 1, 1877. The Frohsinn also attended the third Maifest held by the Dallas Turnverein in 1878. The choir performed for the first time at the Austin Sängerbund held April 15-17, 1879. According to many who attended, this was one of the most spectacular Sängerbunds ever held, and it coincided with the 12th Sängerbund of the Deutsch-Texanischer Sängerbund. The Frohsinn continued participating in various Sängerbunds up until World War I. During the war years, the Frohsinn continued to hold meetings and concerts under the direction of Curt Beck "in spite of a reduced membership."³⁶ On March 27, 1927, the Dallas Frohsinn celebrated its 50th anniversary with 35 singers participating.

During the Great Depression, the 36th Staatssängerbund scheduled for 1933 in Dallas was postponed until October 4-6, 1936. When the festival finally did take place, Dr. Paul van Katwijk directed the Dallas Symphony Orchestra with Mrs. Alex Keese as vocal soloist and Alice Holcomb performing on the violin. The Frohsinn Director, Professor Frank Renard, "officiated as the 'Fest Dirigent'." The Sacred Heart Choir of Muenster, directed by Leo Hensheid, also performed.³⁷

In May 1939, the Frohsinn traveled to Houston for the last Sngerfest before World War II. During the war years, the Frohsinn managed to stay intact, but, in 1948, it lost its "Gesangstunden" and no longer held rehearsals or performances. In 1951, the Frohsinn underwent a revival of sorts when employees of Chance Vought Aircraft (which had moved from Connecticut to Dallas) began singing with the choir. Many employees from the aircraft company were of German heritage and were happily accepted into the Frohsinn choir. The Frohsinn took its turn at hosting state Sngerfests in 1956, 1962, and 1968, despite the fact that it did not have a clubhouse, as most other societies did. The Dallas Frohsinn also has been active in international performances. In 1968, it joined the Chorgemeinschaft Texas on tour to Stuttgart, Germany for an "International Sngerfest."³⁸

The Frohsinn celebrated its 100th anniversary in 1977 by sponsoring the 31st Texas Sngerfest. The choir continues to sing at several nursing homes in Dallas during the Oktoberfest season, as well as performing for church services during Christmas. It actively participates in "German Day in Texas," as well as the Pioneer Ball at the annual State Fair of Texas. The Frohsinn has also hosted visiting choral clubs and orchestras from Germany throughout the years.³⁹

Some of the members of the Frohsinn formed the Texanische Schuhplattler (a traditional Bavarian folk dance group) as well as the Dallas Frohsinn Kapelle, performing concert tours in Germany and Austria. The Dallas Frohsinn Damenchor (formed in 1991) performs with the men's organization in a "Gemischter Chor" (mixed choir) and joined the Deutsch Texanischer Sngerbund in 1993. After 126 years, the Dallas Frohsinn members still follow their club's motto "Freie Bahn Dem Tchtigen" (an open path to the hard worker).⁴⁰

Over its 150-year-history in Texas, German music has gained

in popularity throughout the state. Concerts and state Sngerfests have always been important social events for German Texans to celebrate their history and cultural heritage. There are several notable directors whose contributions to German music in Texas should be acknowledged. Hermann E. Dietel, author, teacher, and musician, was born in Germany in 1857 and came to Texas in 1878. He took part in the first song festival of the West-Texas Hill Singers League in Boerne in 1881 as director of the Echo Singers Society of Smithson Valley in Comal County. Dietel also directed a mixed chorus in New Braunfels. He was a teacher at the Schumannsville School for 40 years from 1886 to 1926 while directing the mixed chorus and men's chorus there. Dietel also directed the New Braunfels' Echo men's chorus from 1896 to 1936. In 1926, he took over as director for New Braunfels' Concordia mixed chorus and was the author of *History of West-Texas Hill Singers League*, published in 1938. Dietel died in New Braunfels in 1941.⁴¹

Over the past 136 years of continuous operation, the San Antonio Beethoven Mnnerchor has had several notable musical directors, including Carl Beck (popular director of the 1800s), Carl Hahn (founder of the San Antonio Symphony Orchestra), Alfred Schaefer (Depression years and World War II), and Dr. Otto Wick (renowned New York conductor and composer of the 1950s.)

The Beethoven Damenchor was fortunate to have had Gisela Bauer, well-known singer and music teacher, as its director from 1932 until 1982. Shirley Donohue took over as director when Gisela Bauer became ill and is still serving as the Damenchor's director. Pianist Alice Murphy accompanied the Damenchor from 1947 to the mid-1980s. Several prominent artists of the latter 1800s performed at the Mnnerchor's Beethoven Hall in San Antonio, including Sarah Bernhardt, John Phillip Sousa, the Chicago Symphony, and Arthur Claassen, who served for a time

Photo of Beethoven Damenchor Austin, Texas, 1952. Courtesy of RABA Studio and Beethoven Maennerchor Archives



as the Männerchor's director.⁴²

Throughout the years, loyal members have played a crucial role in the success and continuity of these singing societies. One such member is Johannes Scholze. Scholze is a 101-year-old, still-active member of the Beethoven Männerchor in San Antonio who came from Dresden, Germany in 1925. He left Germany as a teenager, because both of his parents had died, and jobs were scarce following World War I. He first landed in New York, then took a boat to Galveston, and later traveled inland to San Antonio. Scholze had relatives in New Braunfels on his mother's side of the family (the Simmangs). So, he came to Central Texas to utilize the woodcarving and furniture making skills he had learned from Professor Winde at a trade school in Germany between 1920 and 1923. One of Scholze's first and most auspicious jobs upon arrival was to design and carve the Coat of Arms for the City of San Antonio. This Coat of Arms still hangs in the City Hall Chamber.

Scholze initially went to "the Beethoven" to enjoy the festivals, music and waltzes, and to meet other Germans who shared his same interests. He joined the Beethoven Männerchor in 1927 and sang as a second tenor in the choir. Scholze assisted Director Alfred Schaefer as the choir pianist for about 15 years. Scholze also entertained visitors to the Beethoven Home with his guitar music by holding impromptu performances in the bar room or performing on stage in the patio garden. He and Hans Mangold, another Beethoven member who played the zither, would often play duets for the concert crowd. Scholze received his 75-year-membership pin at the Beethoven's Stiftungsfest (annual anniversary party) in March, 2002. Like so many other German immigrants, Johannes Scholze, came to Texas in search of "a better life" and brought his love of "Das Deutsche Lied" with him.⁴³

As the choirs in the larger cities and towns continued to grow, singing groups in smaller German-Texan communities tended to lose membership. Some of the early singing societies eventually went the way of their own communities and slowly died out. Some groups that have managed to stay active have joined together into such umbrella organizations as the Texanischer Gebirgs Sängerbund (Texas Hill Country Singers

League), whose core members include the Arion Männerchor from Fredericksburg (1908), the Beethoven Damenchor (1932), the Beethoven Männerchor (1867), the Gemischter Chor Frohsinn from Clear Spring (1916), the Gemischter Chor Harmonie from New Braunfels (1937), the Heimatmelodie from Corpus Christi (1989), the Hermannsohn Gemischterchor from Fredericksburg (1934), and the San Antonio Liederkrantz (1892).⁴⁴

Despite the decline of some groups, certain new organizations also formed and flourished during the twentieth century. For example, in 1924, Constantin Janke began actively recruiting members into a new male chorus in Houston which, a year later, would become the Houston Liederkrantz. This new male chorus added to the number of social clubs already in existence in Houston, such as the Houston Sängerbund, Sons of Hermann, and Turnverein.⁴⁵

The official founding date for the Houston Liederkrantz was January 15, 1925. Both the Houston Sängerbund and old Liederkrantz had been formed in 1883 upon the dissolution

of yet an even older society called the Houston Männerchor. During its first two years, the Liederkrantz organized concert evenings, family nights, a riverboat ride, birthday parties, picnics, and a Christmas party. On March 16, 1927, the club acquired a five-year-old building from the First Church of the Nazarene at Abbott and Barnes Streets in The Heights district of Houston. On October 17, 1934, the club received its charter from the State of Texas as "The Houston Liederkrantz," a non-profit organization formed exclusively for social and recreational activities involving "German language, music, art and culture." Throughout the 1930s, the Liederkrantz continued to grow. Besides the male chorus, a group of women singers formed the Ladies Auxiliary on November 4, 1938, as a way to encourage participation of the non-singing women. Auxiliary members served as hostesses for the club's activities and fundraisers for the

club's programs. The Liederkrantz's membership declined during World War II. However, it increased again in the 1950s with the influx of post-war German immigrants. Partly as a result of this growth, members Paul Danjus and Oskar Sauerbrey started a theater group, which was directed for many years by Hermann



Stichweh.⁴⁶

The club's membership again declined in the 1960s. During that time, the women's and men's choirs combined to form a mixed choir, which increased membership in the 1970s. The oil boom in the Houston area brought in new German singers from throughout Texas and other parts of the United States. One such member was Texan-born Walter Fritsche, a fourth-generation German-American who became the choir's director in 1962. As the Liederkrantz's membership grew, so did the need for a bigger clubhouse. In 1974, members purchased an adjacent lot. After the 29th Sängertag (singing day) of the Deutsch-Texanischer Sängerbund in May 1975, the Liederkrantz's clubhouse was moved to the center of the three lots to make room for the new additions. Club members themselves performed the majority of the construction work over a period of six years, from 1976-1982.⁴⁷

In 1982, toward the end of the construction period, a commercial real estate company offered to buy the club property. The sale of the old property gave the Liederkrantz enough money to build a new clubhouse at 5100 Ella Boulevard. The members ratified the sale during the Annual General Meeting on January 9, 1983. Building Chairman Raymond Orsak and the club's president, Peter Knaut, supervised the construction of the new hall, which had its grand opening on September 17, 1983.

At the time of the writing of the festival program from which this history was obtained, Franz Schoennagel was optimistic about the future growth of the Houston Liederkrantz and ended his article with a poem written by an old-time, honorary Liederkrantz member, Otto Kuntscher:

Liederkrantz: Dein woll'n wir gerne uns'res bestes Streben weih'n	Liederkrantz: we give our utmost devotion to you
Sollst, der lieben Heimat ferne eine Burg des Deutschtum sein.	You should be the fortress of German heritage far away from home
Du wirst kraeftig Dich entfalten, schnell erbluehn zu Macht und Glanz, brightness	You will strongly unfold yourself blossom fast to power and brightness
Bleib uns lange noch erhalten Houston's schoener Liederkrantz. ⁴⁸	Stay for a long time Preserve Houston's beautiful Liederkrantz.

Other new organizations have been established in recent years and continue to grow and expand. The Texas Bach Choir formed in 1976 under the direction of Robert Finster at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in San Antonio. This choir has enjoyed national recognition for its performances and has received high praise from both the *San Antonio Express-News* and *Texas Monthly* magazine. The Texas Bach Choir is currently in its 26th year and still going strong.⁴⁹ Another singing society, the Chorgemeinschaft Texas, was formed in 1967 and hosted the ESWE Chor from Wiesbaden, Germany in October, 1998.⁵⁰

Most of these organizations are members of state, national, and international coalitions. The Deutsch Texanischer Sängerbund is made up of the Beethoven Männerchor, Dallas Frohsinn Männerchor, Austin Sängerrunde Männerchor, Houston Sängerbund Männerchor, San Antonio Liederkrantz, Houston Liederkrantz, Beethoven Damenchor, Houston Sängerbund

Damenchor, Austin Sängerrunde Damenchor and the Dallas Frohsinn Damenchor.⁵¹ Most state leagues from Texas and elsewhere joined the Nord Amerikanischer Sängerbund (North American Singers Association). This organization, established in 1848, is made up of different leagues from "districts" throughout the United States and helps coordinate efforts among the various choirs throughout the country.⁵²

State Sängerfests are still held annually and alternate among the cities of Dallas, Houston, Austin, and San Antonio. The 56th Sängertag, held on May 5, 2002, in Dallas, which was hosted by the Dallas Frohsinn Damenchor, received letters of commendation and recognition from Governor Rick Perry, Hanno von Graveneitz (then Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany), and Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison in honor of the singers and their day-long festival.⁵³

In more recent years, choirs and orchestras from the Federal Republic of Germany have visited Texas as guest performers of various singing clubs. For example, the Deutsch-Texanischer Sängerbund celebrated the 51st Sängertag on May 3-4, 1997, with guest performances by the Chorgemeinschaft Lied Hoch with its director, Udo Sternberg, from Glückstadt, Germany.⁵⁴ Other groups that have come from Germany to perform in Texas include the Original Böhmetaler Blasmusik Fallingbostel, the community band from Sevetal, the Shanty Chor Itzehoer Störschipper from Northern Germany, and the Männergesangsvereins (men's singing societies) from both Illerberg-Thal and Heidelberg-Rohrbach. The Männerchor St. W. Nürnberg came to Texas in 1998. Jodler klw Neue Sektion St. Gallen, a yodeling club from Switzerland came to the Beethoven Home in San Antonio in 2000. For the past five years, Hotz & Plotz, a two-man band from the Hofbrau Haus in Munich, has performed during the Beethoven's annual Oktoberfest.⁵⁵ More recently, a band from Wewelsfleth toured Dallas, San Antonio, Austin, and Houston in October 2002. At the Beethoven Männerchor's Fiesta Concert in April 2003, Claus D. Heide, President of the Männerchor since 1982, President of the Deutsch-Texanischer Sängerbund for the past 16 years, and Second Vice-President of the Southern District of the Nord-Amerikanischer Sängerbund, received the German-American Friendship Award from Heiner Model, Consul General of the Federal Republic of Germany, for his efforts in promoting these goodwill tours between Germany and the United States.

One of the largest singing festivals held recently was the 111th Sängerfest des Texanischen Gebirgs-Sängerbundes. It was celebrated at the Al Amin Shriner Hall in Corpus Christi on October 19, 2002 and hosted for the first time by the city's Heimatmelodie Club.⁵⁶ The present-day festivals are much the same as those of earlier years, although usually without quite as much citywide fanfare. Nevertheless, fourth and fifth generation descendents of those Germans who first arrived in Texas in the 1840s are still bringing their children to these festivals to celebrate their German ancestral heritage.

San Antonio's Beethoven Männerchor is the longest-surviving German choir still in operation in the state of Texas. In 1948, President Guido Ransleben provided some insight into why

German Texans have worked so hard to preserve and celebrate their musical traditions when he stated:

The expression of one's innermost feelings through song is the direct expression of the joy of living, and the happiness one experiences through freedom. Freedom from toils and cares of everyday life, freedom from illness or despair, freedom from the oppression of tyrannous rulers, freedom from oneself. This freedom is best expressed in an outburst of song which comes to a neighborly understanding when several voices are combined in harmonious unison, an understanding which the human soul alone appreciates and loves. It propagates a happier more joyful well being, a more

congenial view of life. It conquers the dark retiring character of Puritanism and sows the seeds of harmony and understanding between people of all nations, races or creeds in the only universal language, the language of music.⁵⁷

This philosophy reflects the central role music played in the daily lives of the early German settlers and has held true in the music of their descendants for over 150 years of celebrating "Das Deutsche Lied" in Texas. ■

NOTES

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