

C Lexington Turner Society, Lexington, Missouri, Records, 1859-1867, 1882-1965
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INTRODUCTION

Minutes and accounts for German-American athletic and social club founded in 1859 as Turn Verein (gymnastic society). Records to 1906 are in German. Includes translation by Turner member Nicholas Haerle. Subjects include memberships, balls, music groups, building construction and maintenance, and German-American relations.

DONOR INFORMATION

The records were loaned for copying to the State Historical Society of Missouri by the Lexington Turner Society through Terry Tompson on 10 January 1986 (Accession No. 4695).

ORGANIZATIONAL SKETCH

The Lexington Turner Society was organized by German-American residents of the town on 15 June 1859. A "turner" is a gymnast; the original name, Turn Verein, meant a gymnastic society. Such societies were organized in many towns and cities. The Lexington Turner Society minutes note contacts and visits with turners in St. Louis and Kansas City.

Society officers were a first and second speaker, a secretary, a cashier, a first and second turnwart, and a zuegwart. The duties of the turnwart, recorded on 8 July 1859, were "to keep members in good physical condition." The zuegwart cared for the tumbling mattresses, fencing rapiers, and small weights. Early minutes note the frequent purchase of balls.

In addition to organizing athletic events and tournaments, the Turn Verein sponsored dances and picnics, operated a bar, and rented or loaned their hall to other local groups. In 1860 a Turner Brass Band and Chorus were organized with paid directors.

As a member service, the society subscribed to several newspapers, including the *New York Criminal* and the *Berliner Kladderadatch*. In the 1880s a library was maintained.

When the original Turner Hall burned, the records from 21 June 1867-1875 were lost. The records for 1876-1881 are also missing. The early records, written in German, are descriptive accounts of membership voting, insurance needs, debts, drinking, and rivalries. Plans for social events are detailed, with mention that "American" men could attend if accompanied by a lady.

After 4 January 1907 the records are written in English. About this time the records became more formalized and less revealing. Subjects cover building renovation, loans and debt repayment, insurance, and membership.

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