

HOFMANN, ANNETTE R. *Aufstieg und Niedergang des deutschen Turnens in den USA*. Schondorf: Verlag Karl Hofmann, 2001. Pp. 336. Reihe Sportwissenschaft, Bd. 28.

Neatly packaged, Hofmann's book on the Turner movement in the United States was first presented as a dissertation in the Behavioral Sciences Department at the University of Tübingen in southwestern Germany. For publication it has been abbreviated and touched up, but the format, organizational approach, and the subdivisions all bear its original markings. Because the Turner movement "ruled German America" with a continuing presence from about 1850 to 1918, the author engages assimilation and integration theories based on those set forth by Richard D. Alba in his *Ethnic Identity: The Transformation of White America* (1990).

In the first section, Hofmann treats the Turner societies from their founding in Berlin by Turnvater Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778-1852) and their suppression in Germany during the Metternich era, to their establishment in the United States in 1849. She then moves through the American Civil War period, discussing the Turners' loyalty to the American Constitution. Between that and the outbreak of World War I came a long period of gradual glory and initial dissipation of the movement. During the anti-German period during and between the two World Wars, the Turners moved along their path of Americanization, which brought with it the gradual loss of their German language and culture. From 1945 to the present, Turner culture has ripened into a fairly mainstream American phenomenon. Its German-ness and origin are only vaguely important.

Basic to Hofmann's presentation are some statistics by decades showing both raw numbers from 1820-1990 for all immigrants, of German immigrants and their percentage of the total U.S. population. During the many decades from 1840-1910 an average of 500,000 Germans arrived in each, thus supplying the membership needed for Turnvereine across the northern United States to remain healthy. Achieving some 700 individual societies in their heyday, today's Turners have been reduced to just fifty-eight clubs, which today are organized under an umbrella organization called American Turners.

With some sophistication, Hoffmann summarizes American tendencies to tie Americanization to the invention of ethnicity, which both speeds and retards the process of assimilation. In this section her footnotes grounds her theses within the context of the historical research literature on immigration. Readers learn sufficiently about the hypotheses of the melting pot, cultural pluralism, symbolic ethnicity, the concept of push and pull, the phenomenon of little Germanys, the forty-eighters and the significance of today's festival culture so well practiced by German today and in the past. Concluding this exposition is a discussion of the First World War and its effect upon the German culture in America, none of it new, but all of it relevant to the story of the Turners.

Perhaps the best section in the book begins on page 87 with the history of how the German Turners originated and grew to their dominant position in German-America. We learn that in 1886 the then Bureau—now Department—of Education in a report about physical education in the United States pointed out that the Turner movement had more

gymnasiums and centers for physical training than all the colleges and universities in the entire nation. Though disputable because of cross- or co-utilization both with colleges and such alternatives as the YMCAs, the point is well taken. Nor were the Germans necessarily alone in their efforts for physical activity. The Czechs had the Sokol, the Poles their Flacon Nests, the Yugoslavs the Orliivi Societies, and people from other ethnicities had other organizations.

Just when the first German Turnverein started in the United States is also not entirely clear, though Cincinnati, Louisville, New York, and perhaps the Carolinas trace their origins back to 1848, in the immediate months following the revolutions in Europe that began in March of that year. A significant number of the leaders as well as members of the Turner societies in the succeeding years were the refugees from the revolutionary encounters back in the Fatherland. By 1851 over twenty Turner societies existed, some with over 200 members in them. In the decades that followed, a number of the clubs incorporated the word "socialism" in their titles, and cast this as their mission and ideology across the American landscape. To a degree, therefore, the Turner movement became associated with the "Free Thinkers," and this created tension between their beliefs and those of the Christian communities in which they thrived.

However, the Turners also fostered programs for children and women and maintained pretty good libraries for their communities. Active in the labor movement, they also maintained their own educational programs. They even had a teachers' college in Indianapolis for the preparation of teachers. They also frequently assisted in developing athletic activities and body training for a healthy student body in American public education. On the more social but also competitive side, they held contests involving the entire nation and sometimes clubs travelled to Germany for international competitions. Their ladies auxiliaries surely promoted the equal opportunity for females long before *Title IX*. Today their normal college has been integrated into the Indiana University Purdue University branch at Indianapolis, while the publications and journals have ceased. Concluded with several appendices and a fine bibliography, the book deserves to be translated into English for the benefit of scholars who do not read German.

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