

The Oldest Gym in America?



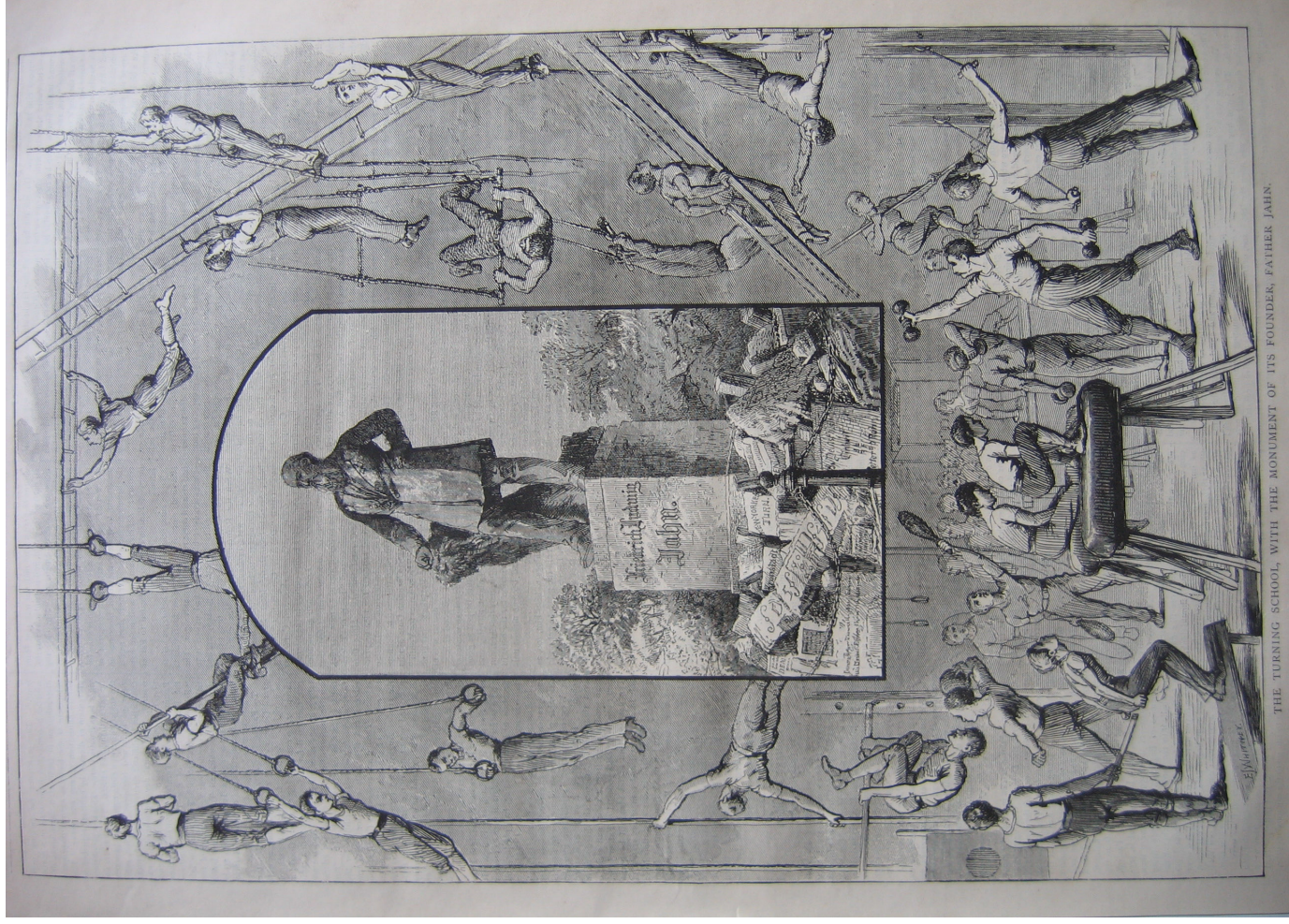
The Turnhall

The Hegeler Carus turnhall (gymnasium) was part of architect W.W. Boyington's original design for the mansion. Spanning the basement and ground levels, the unique design and fittings of this room may represent the oldest surviving example of a private gymnasium in the United States.

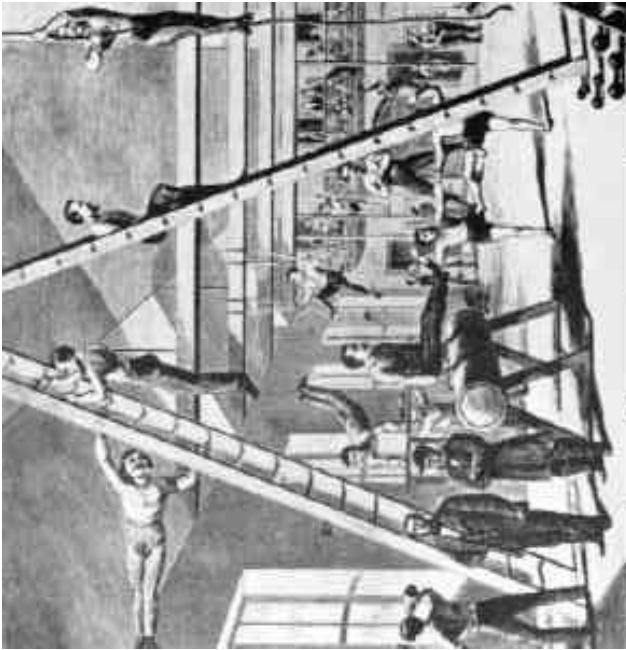


The Turnverein

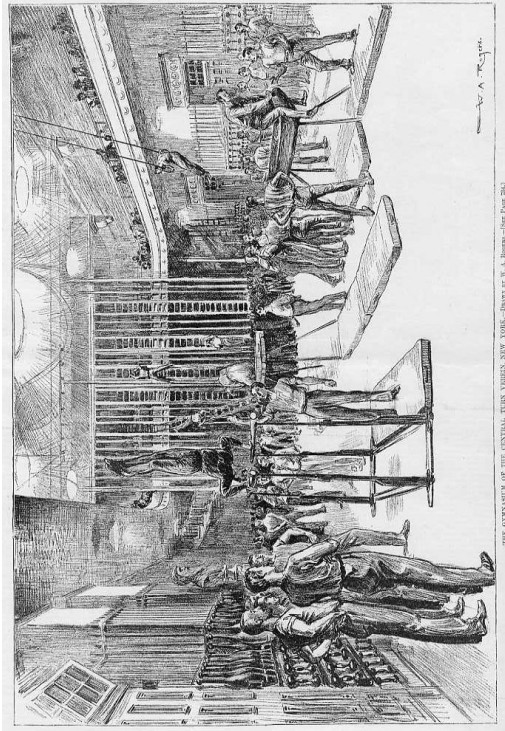
The Hegeler Carus turnhall is typical of the gymnasia of the Turnverein (gymnastics association), which was founded during the early 19th century by Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778-1852). Jahn's combination of physical training, political activism and cultural enrichment was imported to the USA during the 1840s. Numerous German-American *turner* clubs and societies were formed during the subsequent decades. The Turnverein also had a profound influence on the development of physical education in American schools and colleges during the 19th and early 20th centuries.



THE TURNING SCHOOL, WITH THE MONUMENT OF ITS FOUNDER, FATHER JAHN.



An American Turners' gym, about 1860



THE GYMNASIUM OF THE CENTRAL TURN UNION, NEW YORK.—(From the New York Herald, 1864.)



A LADIES' CLASS AT THE GERMAN GYMNASIUM

H. P. Johnston

The Hegeler Carus Turnhall Project

We are aiming for a restoration to close-to-original appearance, towards an ultimate ambition of the Hegeler Carus turnhall serving as a "living museum" of late 19th century German-American physical culture, potentially including demonstrations of (and even practical classes in) some of the sports, games and exercises typical of the period.

Special Features

The Hegeler Carus turnhall is supported by a parabolic arch made of solid brick. We believe that this arch might be the only such arch in a residence – perhaps in the world.



- Recently, much of the turnhall's original exercise and gymnastic apparatus has been recovered from storage and re-assembled. This antique equipment includes:

An adjustable climbing ladder and two support frames



Two very early steel-rimmed basketball hoops



A large collection of wooden dumbbells and Indian clubs



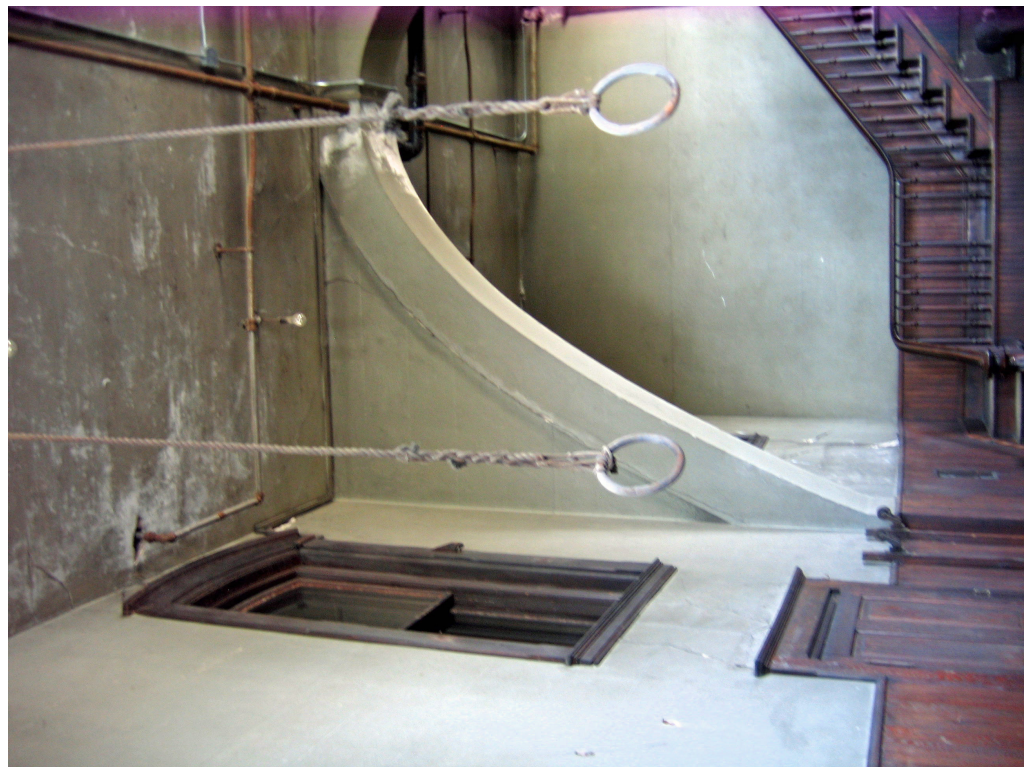
An early electric exercycle



Two wooden stilts



“Roman rings” suspended from the ceiling



A climbing pole that D. T. Suzuki used as a “meditation pole”



A horizontal gymnastics pole and support beam



A wall mounted pulley-weight exercising machine



Cross country skis



A set of parallel bars – without supports (leaning on wall)



A “teeter ladder”



Before



and After

More teeter ladder photos:

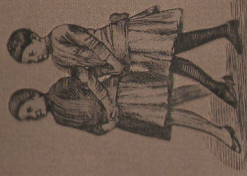


Towards extending the turnhall's collection, the Hegeler Carus trust has recently purchased an antique pommel horse and a wooden bowling set.



Haus-Gymnastik

für
Mädchen und Frauen.



Eine Anleitung zu körperlichen Übungen für
Gesunde und Kranke des weiblichen Geschlechtes.

Herausgegeben

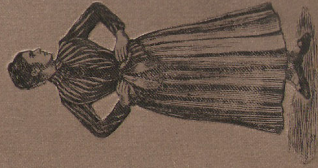
von

E. Angerstein und G. Eckler.

Dr. med. Staatsrath u. D.

Übersetzer.

Mit vielen Holzschnitten.



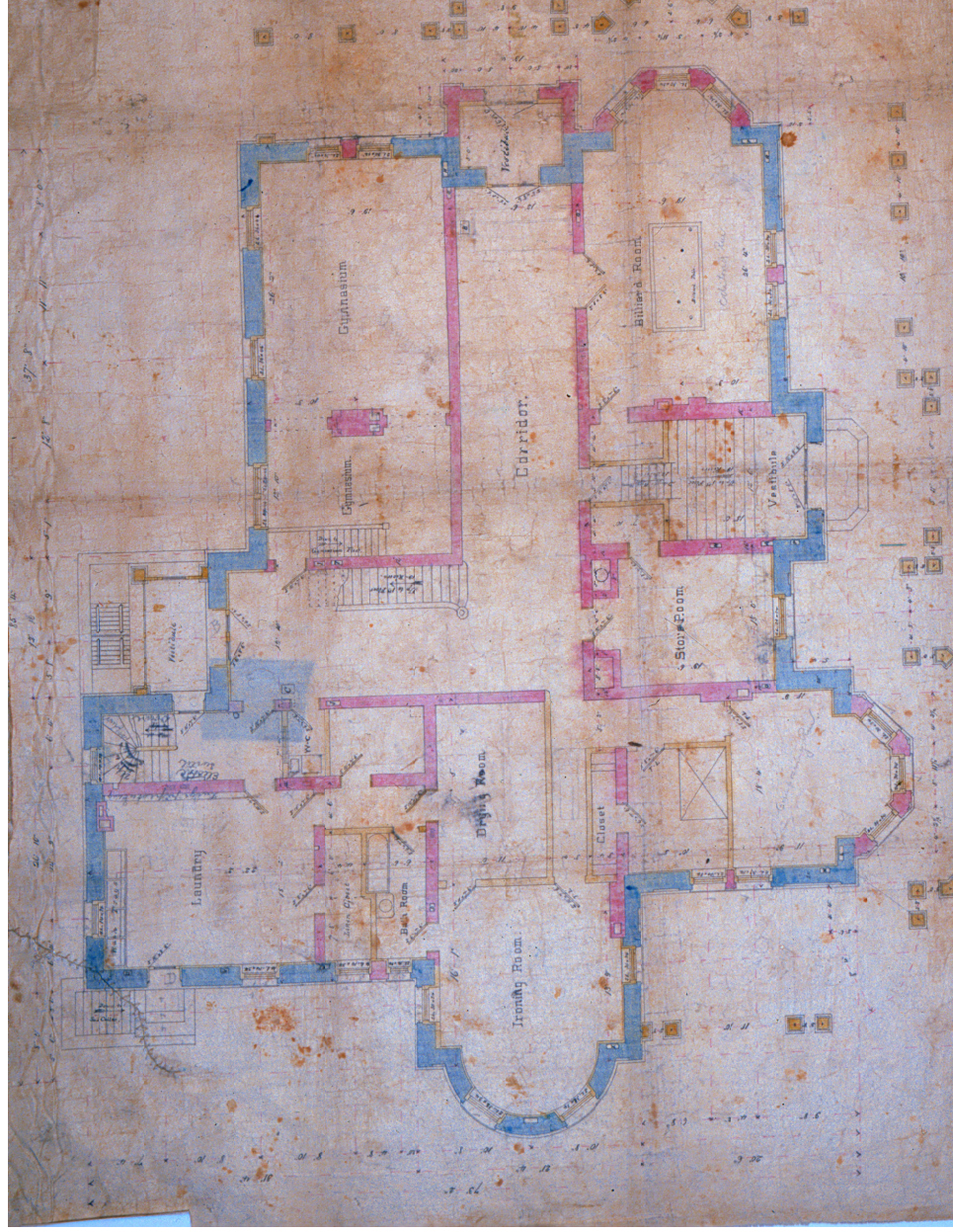
Berlin.
Verlag von Hermann Paetel.
1890.

We have also discovered a copy of the book “**Hausgymnastik für Mädchen und Frauen**” (Home Gymnastics for Girls and Women), written by E. Angerstein and G. Eckler in 1888, on one of the Mansion’s bookshelves. This book includes explanations of many of the types of exercise to be performed on the apparatus housed within the Hegeler Carus Mansion turnhall.



The Challenge

Of course, these pictures also tell the tale of 134 years of wear on the turnhall itself.



Because we believe the Hegeler Carus turnhall is possibly the oldest gym in a residence and because it helps preserve a proud German-American tradition, we feel that it is worthy of widespread support. Towards this goal, the Turnhall Project is seeking donations of time, money, materials, and expertise.

We look forward to hearing from you, and we would most welcome a personal visit from you individually or from your group.

**Original drawing of the
Basement floor of the Mansion.**

Yes, I'm interested in helping with the Hegeler Carus gymnasium project. Enclosed is my check for:

- _____ \$25
- _____ \$50
- _____ \$100
- _____ \$250
- _____ \$500
- _____ \$1,000
- _____ Other

Donations are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

Print this page, fill in, and mail to:

**Hegeler Carus Foundation
1307 Seventh Street
La Salle, IL 61301**

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