



Name of Property: Athenaeum (Das Deutsche Haus)
City, State: Indianapolis, Indiana
Period of Significance: 1893-1946
NHL Criteria: 1 and 4
NHL Theme: II. Creating Social Institutions and Movements
1. Clubs and organizations
III. Expressing Cultural Values
1. Educational and intellectual currents
4. Architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design
Previous Recognition: 1973 National Register of Historic Places
1970 Historic American Buildings Survey
National Historic Context: XVI. Architecture
M. Period revivals
7. Renaissance
XXVII. Education
B. Elementary, Intermediate, and Secondary Education

NHL Significance:

- The Athenaeum is nationally significant as the home of the Normal College of the North American Gymnastic Union (NAGU), the nation's oldest, continuously active school of physical education.
- The Normal College, its graduates, and its sponsor organization, NAGU, were advocates of physical education in the nation's public schools. The program educated teachers who directly contributed to the development of physical education programs in public schools across the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
- Founded in 1851, The Athenaeum, originally named Das Deutsche Haus (the German



House), was designed, built, and functioned as the home of the Socialer Turnverein, a gymnastic and social club rooted in early nineteenth-century Germany. The Turner movement, established by German immigrants in the early nineteenth century, was a major factor in the success in making physical education mandatory in public schools.

- The building's design expresses in brick and mortar and art glass and terra cotta the Turner motto *Mens Sana in Corpore Sano* (A Sound Mind in a Sound Body) with its gymnasium, ball and concert hall, club rooms, *Sommergarten*, and Rathskeller.
- The Athenaeum is an excellent example of the German Renaissance Revival style and an important expression of German-American culture. The Indianapolis architecture firm of Vonnegut and Bohn designed the Athenaeum. Both Bernard Vonnegut and Arthur Bohn were native-born sons of German immigrants, and completed their architectural training in Germany at a time when the German Renaissance Revival was first developing in that country.

Integrity:

- The Athenaeum possesses an exceptional level of historic integrity as the vast majority of the building's finishes, details, and materials are intact including woodwork, plaster, and art glass.
- The materials of brick, Indiana limestone, and terra cotta continue to express the German Renaissance Revival style.

Owner of Property: Athenaeum Foundation

Acreage of Property: Less than an acre.

Origins of Nomination: The Athenaeum Foundation hired Indianapolis architectural historian, William L. Selm, a co-founder of the Athenaeum Foundation (founded in 1991), to write the nomination.

Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:

- NHL designation will enhance the status of the Athenaeum and draw attention to the mission of the building's owner (the Athenaeum Foundation, Inc.) to rescue, preserve, and enhance the building and further the cultivation of the mind and the body.
- NHL designation will also heighten the profile of the architecture of Turner halls, which were built throughout the country and provide a better understanding of the German Renaissance Revival style.
- The public will better understand the Athenaeum's role in the development of American physical education, an often forgotten component in the history of public school education in the United States.

Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program: None known.

Landmarks Committee Comments:



Landmarks Committee Recommendation: Designation. Dr. Young moved, Dr. Stevens seconded; unanimous approval.

Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as of 11/19/15):

Cameron F. Clark, State Historic Preservation Officer, Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Indianapolis, Indiana

Marsh Davis, President, Indiana Landmarks, Indianapolis, Indiana

James A. Glass, Ph.D., Historic Preservation & Heritage Consulting, LLC, Indianapolis, Indiana

David L. Baker, Administrator, Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission, Indianapolis, Indiana

Julia Whitehead, Kurt Vonnegut Memorial Library, Indianapolis, Indiana

André Carson, Indiana 7th District, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC

John A. Herbst, President and CEO, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis, Indiana

Gregory H. Mobley, Archives Specialist, Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, University Library, Indiana University-Perdue University, Indianapolis, Indiana

Karen Roesch, PhD, Director, Max Kade German-American Research and Resource Center, IUPUI, Indianapolis, Indiana

Mitchell K. Zoll, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Indianapolis, Indiana

Jay Gledden, Ph.D., Dean and Professor, School of Physical Education and Tourism Management, Indiana University, IUPUI, Indianapolis, Indiana

Brian Griesemer, PE, President, Indiana German American Society, Indianapolis, Indiana

Walter D. Kamphoefner, Professor of History, President, Society for German American Studies, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas

Advisory Board Recommendation: