

Report by the VP of Development and VP of Culture and Heritage

As reported in the prior issue of the Staatsbote, we started a separate endowment to support the needs of the Horner Memorial Library. An interim goal of \$600,000 was established, and we believe it is important that our readers fully understand the background for this initiative.



Founded in 1817, the Horner Memorial Library is among the oldest libraries in Philadelphia - only the collections of the Library Company, the American Philosophical Society, the University of Pennsylvania, the College of Physicians, and the Athenaeum are older. This is a point of pride, but also poses special challenges. Many of the library's holdings date back to the 18th and early 19th centuries and are in need of preservation, which today means a truly reliable HVAC system. Proper humidity and temperature control are most important. The other libraries mentioned are part of larger institutions or have already established endowments to support their operations, and they have one other advantage the German Society's library does not have: they can appeal to a much wider base of potential supporters, because their holdings are mostly in English, whereas the opposite is true of our library. It is unique: no other German Society in the United States has built up a collection like ours; but it can be used to its full potential only by those who are fluent in German. This was an important aspect in soliciting support from Germany for the Library Renovation Project of the 1990s, and it continues with the summer fellowships at the library financed by the German Historical Institute in Washington DC since 2007. But we cannot expect money from Germany for an endowment,

and only a few American foundations are willing to provide funds for this purpose. We have been successful in raising funds from US foundations for cataloging and capital projects, but the daily costs of operating the library are the responsibility of the Society.

The growing size of the library was a major reason for the move in 1888 from 7th Street to our current location on Spring Garden. The library was planned with the same attention to detail as the auditorium below, signaling to the outside world that books and lectures were just as important as music and social gatherings. When the German Society received its biggest bequest ever, Philadelphia Orchestra member Joseph Horner singled out the library as the area where the money should go, and the library was named in his honor in 1964.

Until the 1980s, the Society bore the costs for the acquisition of new books and the salary of a part-time librarian without much questioning, but then the decline in both membership and knowledge of German set in motion a process of reducing the immediate importance of the Horner Memorial Library for the members of the German Society. This is part of a larger trend in the US and throughout the world: libraries that began as *Volkshilfshilfen* are now recognized as irreplaceable treasures that have become essential sources of research and pride for the communities that they have served so faithfully and so well.

The Horner Memorial Library's importance grew for the scholarly community in large part due to the Library Renovation Project of the 1990s, which led to the online cataloging of the collection, thus making it visible to the outside world. Recognizing the relevance of our collections beyond the purview of the German Society itself is behind the funding for the capital and cataloging projects we are receiving from the William Penn Foundation and the Max Kade Foundation. But this does not mean that we can do without support from within the German Society's membership, nor without the help of those who appreciate the contributions of Ger-

man-Americans to the history of the United States - even if they are not themselves German speakers or of German ancestry.

It cannot be emphasized enough that your financial contributions will go to a unique library and will serve a unique purpose - keeping alive this manifestation of German-American history, and allowing researchers from all over the world to keep exploring and quite literally translating it for future generations. We do not want to be a museum, so we need to have a part-time librarian and money to pay for online cataloging services and professional membership fees. Moreover, we need funds to preserve not only the books and manuscripts, but also the built environment, much like the collections of Philadelphia's Wagner Free Institute of Science are enhanced by still being displayed the way William Wagner and Dr. Joseph Leidy envisioned them. Today, when you step into our reading room your experience is virtually unchanged from what Oswald Seidensticker and his colleagues on the Building Committee intended you to see back in 1888, when the current building opened.

But we need your help in continuing this tradition of having the Horner Memorial Library at the German Society! A substantial endowment will guarantee that there will always be a librarian, as well as a preservation budget to carry on the work started in the 1990s, but suspended for lack of funds. We would also like to continue to offer lectures, exhibitions and workshops, and we plan to enlarge our holdings of recent German literature and children's books, the two areas where the library still functions as a resource for the Society's membership. These activities have been possible recently only due to individual donations and designated funds from the Women's Auxiliary.

Please consider helping us to carry on the work begun in 1817. We would be honored if your contributions would allow us to keep the library going both as a research institution and as a center for the community, whether German Americans, Philadelphians, or anybody interested in how immigrants shaped this country

and were shaped by it. We recognize these gifts by including the donor's name in a summary of the Friends of the Horner Memorial Library, which can be found on the information table in the library. Gifts of \$1,000 or more are also listed in the Linden Society, which was established to recognize donations to any of our endowment funds.

The question is often asked - should I contribute to the Society's Endowment or the Horner Memorial Library Endowment? This is very much a personal choice! The Society will directly and richly benefit from either endowment. At this point, contributions to the Library Endowment amount to \$55,475. And the balance in the Society's endowment account at the Philadelphia Foundation stands at \$945,000.

Since it is still early in the year and there might be some tax changes coming in 2017, it is appropriate to remind readers again that existing tax laws allow donors who are seventy and one half years old and who need to take yearly IRA requested minimum distributions (RDMs), which typically have unpleasant tax consequences, to direct a portion or all of their RDMs—up to \$100,000—to their favorite charity. This feature can be used for donations to our endowment funds or even for a gift to the Annual Fund. Several individuals took advantage of this attractive feature in 2016. If you would like more information, just contact the office, and we will return your call.

Friends of the Horner Memorial Library - additional donors Nov 2016 to Feb 2017:

Donors' names have been removed from online version for their privacy.

- Ernie Weiler and Maria Sturm