NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT
PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM (CD, EMAIL, FLASH DRIVE)
ELECTRONIC FILES MUST BE WORD OR WORD COMPATIBLE

1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE (must comply with an Office of Property Assessment address)

Street address: 2528-32 N. 4th Street

Postal code: 19133 Councilmanic District: 7th

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: Germania Turn-Verein; Knitters' Hall

Current/Common Name: True Light Pentecostal Church

3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

☒ Building ☐ Structure ☐ Site ☐ Object

4. PROPERTY INFORMATION

Condition: ☐ excellent ☒ good ☐ fair ☐ poor ☐ ruins

Occupancy: ☒ occupied ☐ vacant ☐ under construction ☐ unknown

Current use: Church

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Please attach

6. DESCRIPTION

Please attach

7. SIGNIFICANCE

Please attach the Statement of Significance.

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1885 to 1955

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1885

Architect, engineer, and/or designer:

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan:

Original owner: Germania Turn-Verein

Other significant persons:

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:

The historic resource satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- ☒ (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,
- ☒ (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- ☒ (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- ☐ (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- ☐ (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- ☐ (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- ☐ (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- ☐ (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- ☐ (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- ☒ (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Please attach

9. NOMINATOR

Organization Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia Date March 3, 2020

Name with Title Benjamin Leech, consultant Email bentleech@gmail.com; patrick@preservationalliance.com

Street Address 1608 Walnut Street, Suite 1702 Telephone 215-546-1146

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19103

Nominator ☐ is ☒ is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: 3 March 2020

☒ Correct-Complete ☐ Incorrect-Incomplete Date: 15 May 2020

Date of Notice Issuance: 15 May 2020

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: True Light Pentecostal Church

Address: PO Box 60818

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19133

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: 17 June 2020

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: 10 July 2020

Date of Final Action: 10 July 2020

☒ Designated ☐ Rejected Criteria for Designation A, B, C and J

5. Boundary Description

This nomination proposes to designate a portion of the property currently known as 2528-32 N. 4th Street (OPA Account #777372000), which includes two deeded parcels, 2528 N. 4th Street (Registry Plan Number 32N-100-148), and 2530-32 N. 4th Street (Registry Plan Number 32N-100-136). The nomination limits the proposed designation to 2530-32 N. 4th Street, and excludes the vacant lot at 2528 N. 4th Street, which was not historically associated with the original parcel.

The following boundaries reflect the historic dimensions of 2530-32 N. 4th Street, Germania Turn Verein (depicted in green below):
Situate on the west side of Fourth Street at the distance of two hundred and fifty feet southward from the south side of Huntingdon Street in the Nineteenth Ward of the City of Philadelphia, containing in front or breadth on the said Fourth Street forty feet and extending of that width in length or depth Westwardly between lines parallel with the said Huntingdon Street ninety feet to Leithgow Street.

Property boundary for 2528-32 N. 4th Street

Boundary of proposed nomination

2528-32 N. 4th Street is outlined in red; 2530-32 N. 4th Street is highlighted in green.

6. Physical Description

The former Germania Turn-Verein, or Turner's Hall, is a three-story, stucco-clad masonry structure occupying the full width and depth of a 40-foot by 90-foot midblock parcel fronting North 4th Street in the Kensington neighborhood of Philadelphia. The building's primary elevation faces east onto 4th Street with a rear elevation facing west onto Leithgow Street. A low-pitched gable roof sits behind an elaborate gabled parapet crowning the front elevation, which is designed in an eclectic Queen Anne style incorporating Italianate and German *Rundbogenstil* elements [Fig. 1]. The rear (west) and side (north and south) elevations are unadorned facades with minimal fenestration [Figs. 2-3]. The building shares part of its north party wall with an adjacent two-story rowhouse. The building was constructed c.1885 as a gymnasium and meeting hall for the Germania Turn-Verein. The architect is unknown.

The 4th Street elevation is three bays wide, with a central entryway flanked by symmetrical side bays. The tall two-story raised entrance is currently accessed by a contemporary concrete stoop and ramp. A double-leaf doorway with replacement door units is crowned by a tall casement transom framed by an elaborate arched pressed metal hood. The hood is carried on engaged Ionic colonettes resting on projecting brackets. An assortment of rosettes, scrolls, and stylized foliage decorate the hood and its supporting brackets. Two tall, two-story segmental arch windows flank the doorway. The bottom thirds of each window have been infilled with stucco, but the upper portions retain the majority of their original stacked double-hung wood sashes, turned mullion columns, and rosette-studded lintels. These windows also feature pressed-metal hoods with prominent keystones.

The upper floor features three round-arched window bays, each featuring a pair of double-hung windows set below blank lunettes and framed by engaged Corinthian colonettes. Between and above these windows, four massive corbelled brick piers rise from a foliated impost band, each pier topped with a pressed metal finial cap. A bracketed cornice stretches between the piers, with a central gabled parapet set between the two inner piers. Each pier is capped by a pressed metal finial.

Figure 1: East (Fourth Street) elevation

Figure 2: West elevation entrance detail

Figure 3: West elevation detail

Figure 4: South (side) and west (front) elevations (Cyclomedia/Philadelphia Atlas)

Figure 5: : East (Leithgow Street) and south (side) elevations (Cyclomedia/Philadelphia Atlas)

Figure 6: East (Leithgow Street) and north (side) elevations (Cyclomedia/Philadelphia Atlas)

7. Significance

The former Germania Turn-Verein, or Turner's Hall, was constructed in 1885 as a private gymnasium and meeting hall serving Kensington's once sizable working-class German-American community. It is a rare surviving local example of a building type that proliferated across the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when German immigrant followers of Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778-1852) established hundreds of Turner associations ("turner" is the German word for gymnast) to promote physical education, German culture, and progressive politics. The Germania Turn-Verein was one of at least seven such Turner associations active in Philadelphia at the height of the movement, but one of only two whose clubhouse still stands.

In 1918, the hall was acquired by the American Federation of Full-Fashioned Hosiery Workers (AFFFHW), one of the most progressive and influential industrial unions of its era. Thereafter known as Knitters' Hall, the building served as both a local union hall and the union's national headquarters at a time when Kensington was the nation's largest producer of full-fashioned hosiery and the AFFFHW was at the vanguard of the American labor movement. The building played a central role in some of the most consequential labor actions in Philadelphia's history, including the 1930 Aberle Mill Strike in which violent unrest claimed the life of union member Carl Mackley, whose funeral drew a reported 60,000 sympathizers to a mass demonstration in nearby McPherson Square.

As both an architecturally distinctive example of a surviving neighborhood turnverein hall and as a site of profound historical significance to the labor movement of the early twentieth century, the former Germania Turn-Verein merits listing on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. It satisfies the following criteria for historic designation as set forth in the Philadelphia Historic Preservation Ordinance §14-1004 (1):

A: Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past;

B: Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation;

C: Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style;

and

J: Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

The Turner Movement and German-American Identity

Figure 7: Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778-1852), founder of the Turner movement (Wikipedia Commons)

The roots of the Turner movement trace back to the Napoleonic Wars of the early 19th century, when a series of Prussian military defeats led the charismatic German educator and political activist Friedrich Ludwig Jahn to begin promoting physical fitness as a means of bolstering pan-German patriotism and resistance to the French occupation of Prussia. Now widely recognized as the father of modern gymnastics, Jahn established the first *turnplatz*, or open-air gymnasium, in Berlin in 1811. Here, young men gathered for organized exercise on Jahn's specially-devised balance beams, pommel horses, parallel bars, and other now-standard gymnastic equipment. In early 1813, Jahn helped organize the Lützow Free Corps, a volunteer militia that proved instrumental in the Prussian Army's eventual victory over Napoleon. A number of Jahn's "Turners" enlisted in the force, and their success led to the proliferation of Turner associations, or *turnverein*, across Prussia and the nascent German Confederation. The Turner movement remained politically active and closely associated with

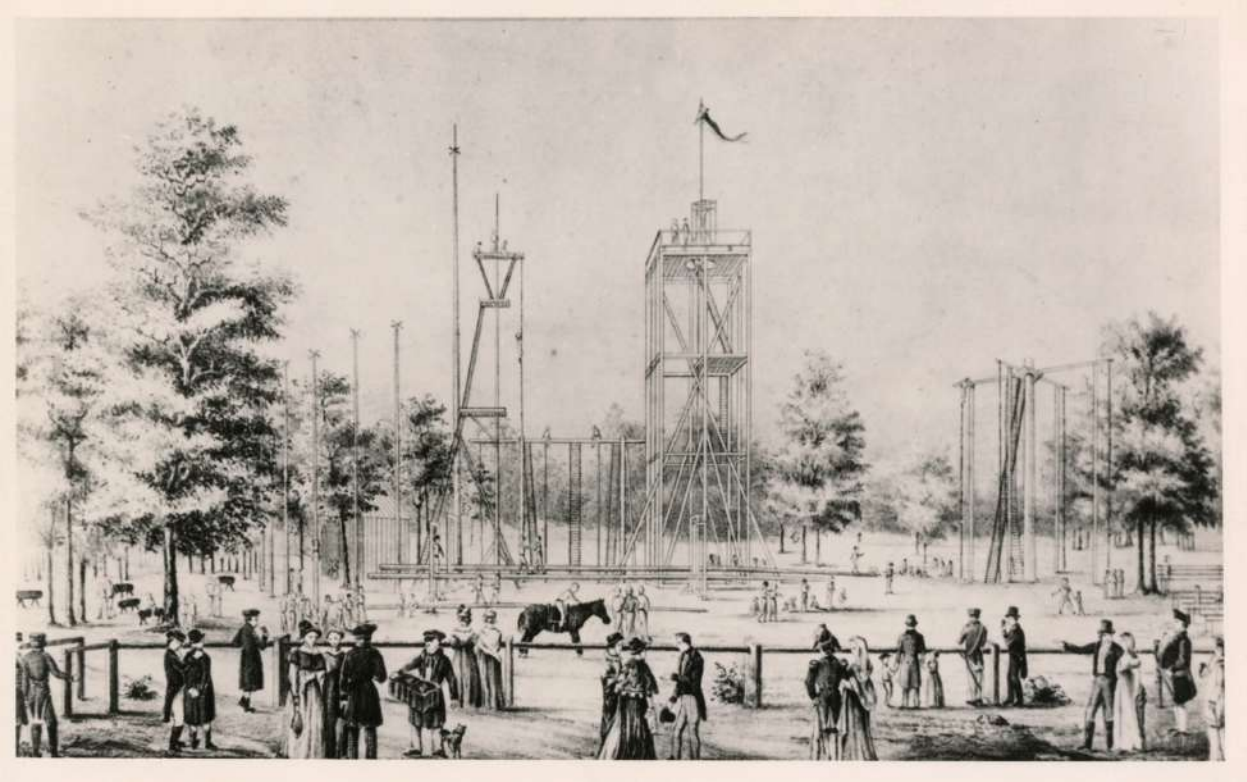

Figure 8: Berlin Turnplatz, 1817 (https://www.dhm.de/lemo/bestand/objekt/der-turnplatz-in-der-hasenheide-in-berlin-1817.html

pan-German nationalism and the anti-clerical Free Thinker movement in the run-up to the Revolution of 1848, whose ultimate failure sent many Turners into exile in the United States. These so-called "Forty-Eighters" quickly established *turnvereins* in cities across America, including Cincinnati (1848), New York City (1848), Philadelphia (1849), Baltimore (1849), and Brooklyn (1850).[1] By 1855, seventy-four American Turner societies boasted approximately 4,500 members.[2]

As in their native land, German-American Turner associations continued to promote physical education as a vehicle for German identity and progressive politics under the motto "a sound mind in a sound body."[3] Turners were vocal supporters of abolition and opponents of temperance, proclaiming in a 1855 national platform that "slavery… [is] unworthy of a republic

[1] Metzner, Henry. *A Brief History of the American Turnerbund.* Pittsburgh: National Executive Committee of the American Turnerbund, 1924, p. 8.
[2] Pumroy, Eric L. and Rampelmann, Katja. *Research Guide to the American Turner Movement.* Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996, p. xviii.
[3] "Roxborough Turners Records," https://hsp.org/sites/default/files/mss/finding_aid_3056_roxborough.pdf

and not in accord with the principles of freedom" and that "prohibition laws [are] undemocratic in theory and not feasible in practice."[4] Turners served as bodyguards at President Lincoln's inauguration in 1861 and funeral in 1865; upon the outbreak of the Civil War, an estimated 6,000 Turners enlisted in the Union Army.[5] Many *turnverein* also had strong ties to the labor movement and socialism, though some associations were more radical than others.[6] Over time, the radicalism of the founding "Forty-Eighters" was somewhat tempered through assimilation and expansion; while some clubs remained hotbeds of political agitation (particularly in the industrial Midwest), others sought a more neutral, apolitical identity. One cause drew particular interest for clubs across the political spectrum, however: the introduction of physical education into the public school system. Turner associations across the country took the lead in lobbying their state and local governments to develop physical education curriculum and raised funds for the necessary equipment, and Turners served as program directors and instructors in many school districts.[7]

By the turn of the 20th Century, German Americans "were perhaps the best-organized, most visible, and most respected group of newcomers in the United States," notes historian Russell Kazal.[8] In addition to their raw numbers (Germans were the nation's most populous "foreign stock" by the 1910s), German immigrant communities were characterized by a strong *verein* culture that supported a prodigious number of civic associations in addition to the Turners; shooting clubs (*schützenverein*), singing societies (*maennerchor*), German-language theaters and libraries, and mutual benefit associations were among the many civic institutions found in German-American communities across America. Often these clubs erected purpose-built headquarters, and *turnverein* halls in particular-- given their need for high ceilings and large open spaces-- were particularly suited to grand architectural expression. While no one style predominated, consciously Germanic identifiers (*rundbogenstil* windows, German-language

[4] Metzner, p. 13.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 18.
[6] Wagner, Ralf. "Turner Societies and the Socialist Tradition," *German Workers' Culture in the United States, 1850 to 1920.* Hartmut Keil, ed. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988, pp. 226-7.
[7] Pumroy and Rampelmann, p. xxiii.
[8] Kazal, Russell A. *Becoming Old Stock: The Paradox of German-American Identity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006, p. 2.

inscriptions, etc.) were common. "In many cities and large towns of the East and Midwest it is still possible to find the grand, Germanic-style public buildings that the Turners built a century ago to serve as their meeting halls," note historians Eric L. Pumroy and Katja Rampelmann. "Many…. have a size and former elegance that testify to the prosperity and prominence the Turner societies once enjoyed."[9] At the height of the movement in the 1890s, more than 300 American Turner associations boasted a combined membership of 40,000.[10]

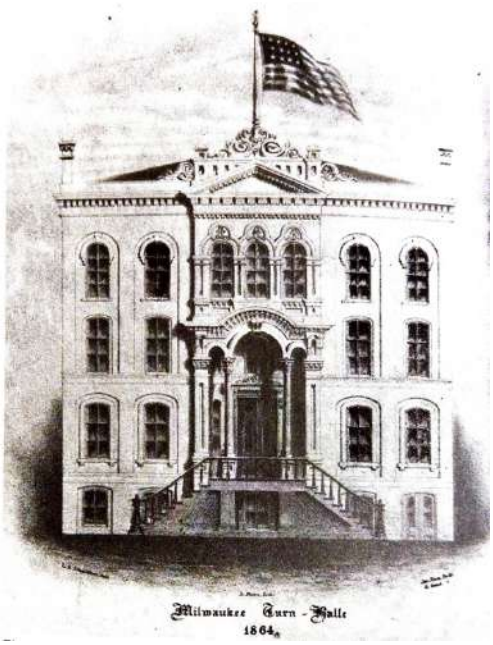

Figure 9: Milwaukee Turn-Halle, 1864 (Milwaukee County Historical Society)

A number of factors contributed to the movement's subsequent decline; anti-German hysteria of the First and Second World Wars, the strictures of Prohibition, and general assimilation pressures all took a toll. As Pumroy and Rampelmann observe, "The decline of the Turners parallels the disappearance of the prosperous, self-confident German-American community that played such an important part in American urban life from the mid-nineteenth century through World War I, but which is now almost completely forgotten."[11]

Figure 10: Chicago Vorwaertz Turner Hall, 1896 (John Morris/Chicago Patterns)

Turners in Philadelphia

Philadelphia was an early and prominent center of Turner activities in America, and the movement's subsequent growth and evolution in the city closely mirrored the trajectory of the

[9] Pumroy and Rampelmann, p. ix.
[10] *Ibid*, p. ix.
[11] *Ibid*., p. x.

movement nationwide. Philadelphia's first *turnverein*, the Philadelphia Turngemeinde, was founded by exiled "Forty-Eighters" in 1849, and the city hosted the first national Turnfest, an Olympic-like competition and festival, in 1851. A second national Turnfest held on Lemon Hill in 1854 was marred by nativist riots, an event which helped galvanize support for the movement within the German-American community and among allied progressives.[12]

Initially meeting in rented quarters and open-air exercise grounds, the Philadelphia Turngemeinde established its first *turnhalle* at 444 N. 3rd Street in 1858.[13] After the Civil War, during which 120 Turngemeinde members served the Union Army in their own dedicated battalion, the movement's continued growth led to a formation of smaller *turnverein* clubs in neighborhoods across the city, including Kensington, Southwark, West Philadelphia, Brewerytown, and Roxborough-Manayunk. The Philadelphia Turngemeinde moved into a new purpose-built headquarters at 435 N. 6th Street in 1888, and again into a larger quarters on the northeast corner of Broad Street and Columbia Avenue in 1911. By 1925 an estimated 2,800 Philadelphians were members of a Turner association (including 2,400 in the central Turngemeinde).[14]

Germania Turn-Verein

Founded on March 22, 1866 by former members of the Philadelphia Turngemeinde, the Germania Turnverein was one of Philadelphia's earliest and most active neighborhood Turner associations in the immediate post-Civil War period. The club was officially incorporated in 1871 (an act which typically postdated an association's actual formation by a number of years) and initially met near 3rd and Noble Streets in Northern Liberties.[15] In 1875 the club moved to 2245 Leithgow Street in Kensington, and nine years later purchased an undeveloped plot of land

[12] Metzner, pp. 9-12.
[13] Finding Aid, Philadelphia Turngemeinde collection, German Society of Pennsylvania http://dla.library.upenn.edu/dla/pacscl/detail.html?id=PACSCL_GSP_MsColl22
[14] Pumroy and Rampelmann, p. 224.
[15] "A German Anniversary," *Philadelphia Inquirer,* March 23, 1889, p. 2; "State Legislature," *Philadelphia Inquirer,* Jan. 26, 1871, p. 8;

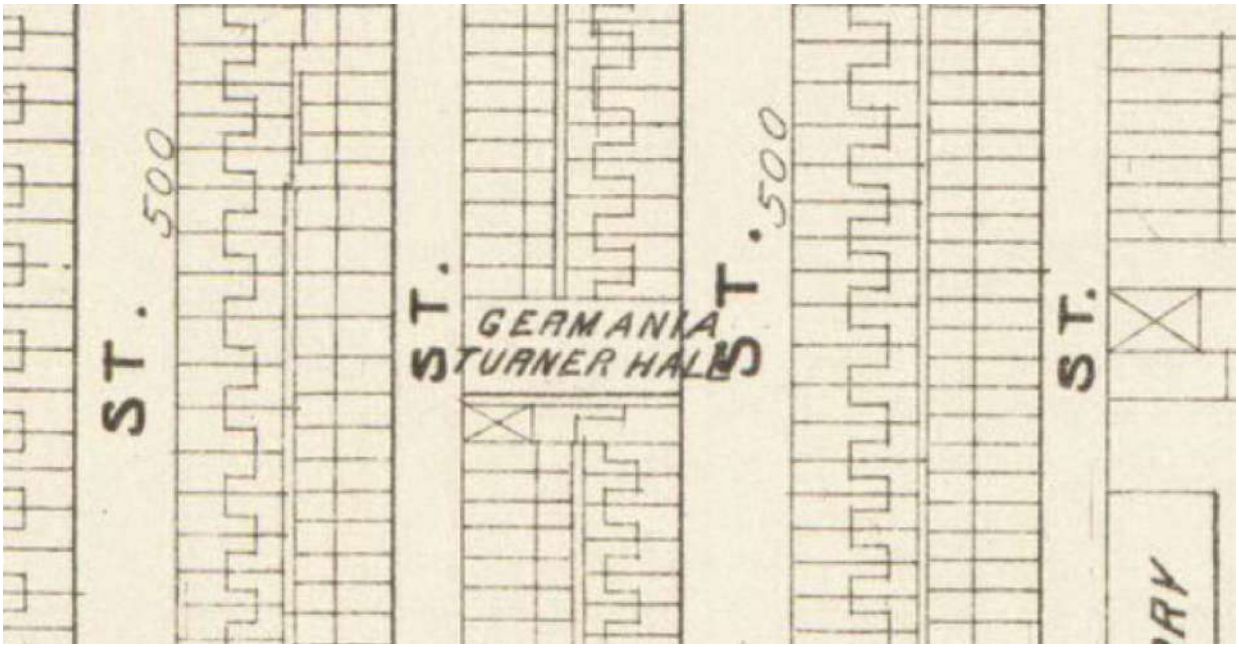

Figure 11: Baist's Property Atlas of the City and County of Philadelphia, *1885. Plan 27 (detail)*

nearby at 2530 N. 4th Street for the construction of their first purpose-built *turnhalle*.[16] The subject of this nomination, the building was completed in 1885 [Fig. 11] and designed by an unknown architect in an imposing, ornate Queen Anne style.

Located on an otherwise residential block of two-story rowhouses, the building's scale and architectural character stood out from its neighbors, with a dramatic corbelled brick cornice, monumental round-arched upper-floor windows, and a formal raised entrance and oversized ground-floor windows that lent the structure an unmistakable civic stature. Typical for Turner halls of the era, the building featured a large, high-ceilinged gymnasium and meeting hall, ancillary offices, meeting rooms, and a library.

By 1890 the association claimed 450 members and operated a gymnastics school for young men and women.[17] Club members were regular participants in area competitions, exhibitions, and parades, and an auxiliary bicycle club, the Germania Turner Cyclers, was formed in 1895.[18] In addition to hosting public lectures and various social events, the hall also briefly served as the

[16] Deed Book DHL 4, p. 71, John Heine to the Germania Turn Verein, Dec. 31, 1875; Deed Book JOD 228, p. 59, Julius Herre to the Germania Turn Verein, Aug. 4, 1884.
[17] "A German Anniversary," *Philadelphia Inquirer,* March 23, 1889, p. 2
[18] "Bicycle News," *Philadelphia Inquirer,* March 23, 1895, p. 4.

Figure 12: Germania Turn-Verein membership card, 1906 (Library Company of Philadelphia)

headquarters of a local chapter of the *Liga für persönliche Freiheit* (League for Personal Freedom), a turn-of-the-century anarchist association.[19]

The Germania Turn-Verein remained active through the 1910s but appears to have suffered from shrinking membership and financial difficulties by the early 20th century. In 1905, the association briefly lost ownership of the building after being sued by a woman who broke her leg attending a Lady Order of Foresters dance at the hall. The woman, Mrs. J.T. Donohue, purchased the building at sheriff's sale after the club failed to pay her $2,000 settlement, but ownership reverted back to the turnverein shortly thereafter.[20] The building was again lost at sheriff's sale, this time permanently, in 1917, when it was sold to the estate of John M. Schwehm to satisfy outstanding debts.[21] The club's relationship to Schwehm, a wealthy Germantown textile mill owner who died in 1916, is unknown; the Germania Turn-Verein appears to have permanently disbanded after the sale.

[19] Pumroy and Rampelmann, p. 223.
[20] "May Own Property Where She was Hurt," *Philadelphia Inquirer,* Feb. 7, 1905, p. 14.
[21] Deed Book JMH 265, p. 321, Julius C. Levi et al vs the Germania Turn Verein, Nov. 12, 1917.

The building survives today as one of only two known Turner halls still standing in Philadelphia. At least six other halls from late 19th and early 20th centuries have been lost to demolition, including three former Philadelphia Turngemeinde halls (444 N. 3rd Street, 429-35 N. 6th Street, and 1705 N. Broad Street [Fig. 13]), the Southwark Turnverein (1127-33 Wharton Street [Fig. 14]), the Columbia Turnverein (1309-13 N. 28th Street), and the West Philadelphia Turn- und Schul-Verein (7134 Elmwood Avenue). The other known surviving Turner hall, constructed by the Germania Turnverein of Roxborough and Manayunk in 1878, is a modest two-story building at 418 Leverington Avenue. Now known as the Roxborough Turners, the club is the last surviving Turner association in Philadelphia and still occupies its historic clubhouse [Fig. 15].[22]

Figure 13: Philadelphia Turngemeinde, Ballinger & Perrot, 1911 (demolished). www.phillyandstuff.blogspot.com

Figure 14: Southwark Turnverein, William Decker, 1893 (demolished). www.phillyhistory.org

Figure 15: Germania Turnverein of Roxborough and Manayunk, 1878, architect unknown. Cyclomedia/Philadelphia Atlas

[22] Finding Aid, Roxborough Turner Records, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, https://hsp.org/sites/default/files/mss/finding_aid_3056_roxborough.pdf

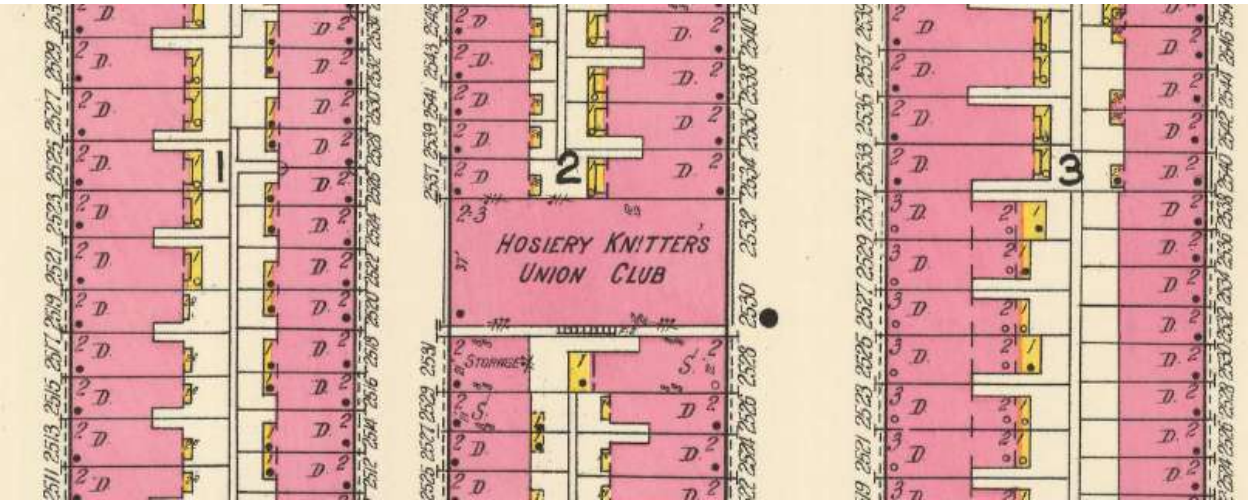

Figure 16: Sanborn Fire Insurance Atlas, *1920, Volume 12, Plate 1107 (detail)*

Knitters' Hall

After the closure of the Germania Turn-Verein, the property was acquired by the Full-Fashioned Hosiery Workers Union Local 706 in April 1918. During its tenure as "Knitters' Hall," the building served as both a local union hall and the national headquarters for the American Federation of Full-Fashioned Hosiery Workers (AFFFHW), a progressive and at times radical union that drew national attention for its organizing efforts in the 1920s and 1930s. Kensington had long been a major center for textile manufacturing, and by 1920 an estimated 30 percent of all Kensington workers were employed in hosiery mills.[23] Most hosiery at the turn of the century was made from cotton and produced on rotary knitting machines that formed uniform fabric tubes which were often ill-fitting and prone to sagging over time. In contrast, "full-fashioned" luxury hosiery was typically silk and stitched into the exact shape of a leg on complex machinery run by highly-skilled workers.[24] With the arrival of the short-skirted "flapper" fashions of the Roaring Twenties, the popularity of full-fashioned silk stockings soared and the industry underwent a period of rapid and often turbulent expansion. By 1930, the Kensington-based

[23] Scranton, Philip. *The Philadelphia System of Textile Manufacture: 1884-1984.* Philadelphia: Philadelphia College of Textiles and Science, 1984, p. 16.
[24] "American Federation of Full-Fashioned Hosiery Workers," *Fortune,* January 1932, p. 49.

AFFFHW represented more than 9,000 workers locally and 14,000 nationally, with Knitters Hall playing a central role in some of the most consequential labor actions of the era.[25]

Kensington's first full-fashioned hosiery mills were established in the late 1880s and employed primarily English- and German-born knitters who learned the trade in their native countries.[26] Early unionization efforts were sporadic and largely ineffectual until 1909, when approximately 50 workers banded together to form the United Textile Workers Local 706, later known as the Full-Fashioned Hosiery Workers Union of Philadelphia and Vicinity, in an attempt to raise wages (which then averaged about $18 a week) and reduce the standard work-week from 60 to 54 hours. The fledgling union joined in the 1910 general strike called by Philadelphia's streetcar workers, and later organized walkouts in the Peerless (1910) and Minura (1913) hosiery mills over wage cuts. Also in 1913, union members from Philadelphia and four other cities (Fort Wayne, Indiana; Dover, Delaware; Langhorne, Pennsylvania, and Brooklyn, New York) met at the Kensington Labor Lyceum to form the American Federation of Full-Fashioned Hosiery Workers, the industry's first national labor coalition.[27] Policy disagreements soon led to a schism; in 1915 the

Figure 17: Full-fashioned hosiery. Fortune, *January 1932*

Figure 18: AFFFHW union logo, c. 1930. Wisconsin Historical Society

[25] Palmer, Gladys L. *Union Tactics and Economic Change: A Case Study of Three Philadelphia Unions.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1932, pp. 109, 124.
[26] Rogin, Lawrence. *Making History in Hosiery: The Story of the American Federation of Hosiery Workers.* Philadelphia: American Federation of Hosiery Workers, p. 4.
[27] *Ibid.*, pp. 5-7.

TEXTILE WORKERS JUDGE LIMPIN' LIM'RICKS. These textile workers met at Knitters' Hall, Fourth street below Huntingdon, to make today's award in the lim'rick contest. In the picture, from left to right, are (front row) Gustave Geiges, president Full Fashioned Hosiery Knitters' Local Union 706, and Frank McKosky, vice president United Textile Workers of America; (middle row) Lillie Tripp, Elma Cifelli, Mabel Young and Mabel McEntee; (back row) Mary Javes, Kathryn McClay, Anna Y. Torrance and Louise Fahrbach

Figure 19: Textile workers gathered at Knitters' Hall, Evening Public Ledger, *Jan. 20, 1921*

national AFFFHL voted to withdraw from the United Textile Workers, while Local 706 voted to exit the AFFHL and maintain its affiliation with the UTW. The two organizations maintained a loose alliance but operated independently until 1922, when the AFFFHL rejoined the UTW and Local 706 rejoined the AFFFHL.

Local 706, at this time operating independently from the AFFFHL, purchased the former Germania Turn-Verein hall in the spring of 1918. After its interiors were gutted by a massive fire in February 1920, the building was renovated and reopened as Knitters' Hall by early 1921.[28]

[28] "Turner's Hall is Burned," *Evening Public Ledger,* Feb. 3, 1920, p. 1; "Textile Workers Award $100 to City Transit Clerk," *Evening Public Ledger,* Jan. 20, 1921, p. 2.

The timing was fortuitous, as 1921 proved to be a momentous year for Kensington's hosiery workers and Philadelphia's labor movement. That year a mill owners' lockout put more than a thousand hosiery workers out of work, and the union responded with a general strike that became, according to historian Sharon McConnell-Sidorick, "one of the longest and, for union members, most emotionally wrenching strikes in the neighborhood's history."[29] At issue was a manufacturers' drive to "double up" production by forcing workers to operate two machines at once, a practice which had long been a point of contention in the industry. The resulting stalemate left all but two of Kensington's mills shuttered or barely operational. As the strike stretched into the summer and fall, Knitters' Hall was a locus of activity and important gathering place for workers' meetings, food drives, and morale-boosting dances, concerts and movie screenings.[30] The strikers ultimately prevailed in late 1921 after a majority of mill owners withdrew their demands; union membership and enthusiasm thereafter soared. Their victory also led to the formal reunification of Local 706 with the national AFFFHL, which then established its national headquarters and regional Branch 1 offices in Knitters' Hall.[31]

With the Jazz Age now in full swing, exponential industry expansion thrust the AFFFHL and Kensington's mill workers into the vanguard of the American labor movement. A number of interconnected trends contributed to the union's growing strength in the 1920s. First, the union began organizing young female workers in prodigious numbers. "On the whole the spirit of the girls is more lively and more enduring than that of the men," noted one industry analyst at the time. "The hosiery workers say quite frankly that the girls carry their strikes."[32] Second, union leaders grew more sophisticated in their strategies and tactics, adding a full-time director of research and communications in 1926, publishing the nationally-distributed *Hosiery Worker* out of Knitters' Hall, and coordinating extensive pro-union advertising campaigns. Third, as manufacturers expanded beyond Philadelphia into the less union-friendly Philadelphia suburbs and American South, the union raised its national profile by aggressively "following the machines" into a series of contentious and often violent organizing drives beyond Philadelphia.[33]

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[29] McConnell-Sidorick, Sharon. *Silk Stockings and Socialism: Philadelphia's Radical Hosiery Workers from the Jazz Age to the New Deal.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017, p. 41.
[30] Rogin, p. 12; McConnell-Sidorick, p. 46.
[31] Palmer, p. 106.
[32] Ibid., p. 109.
[33] Rogin, p. 14.

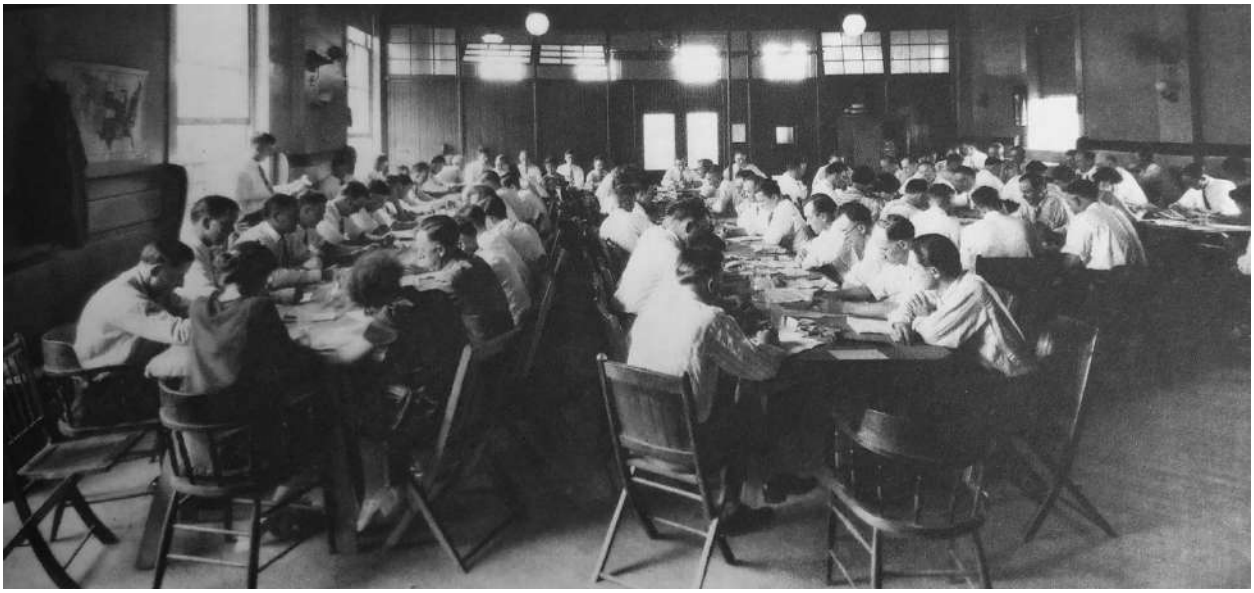


Figure 20: Union meeting at Knitters' Hall, c. 1931. Fortune, *January 1932.*

Fourth, the union developed an increasingly progressive social justice platform that addressed issues far beyond industry-specific wages and working conditions, organizing classes in labor history at Knitters' Hall and helping lead efforts to establish viable leftist third parties in local and national politics. While ultimately unsuccessful at the ballot box, these efforts later bore fruit in the progressive policies of President Roosevelt's New Deal.[34]

In 1930, the AFFFHW and Knitters' Hall were again thrust into the national spotlight when the union organized a strike against the H.C. Aberle and Company hosiery mill to protest wage cuts and anti-union policies. On the evening of March 6, clashes between striking workers and non-union "scabs" turned violent when a group of armed strikebreakers opened fire on a group of strike supporters, killing 22-year-old union member Carl Mackley and wounding two others. Mackley's death sent shockwaves across the city and galvanized support for the strikers. On March 8, Mackley's body was laid in state at Knitters' Hall; thousands of mourners formed a line that stretched four blocks to Lehigh Avenue and 6th Street to pay their respects. The next day, a public funeral at nearby McPherson Square drew 65,000 Philadelphians to what is widely considered the largest labor demonstration in the city's history [Fig. 21], where the assembled crowds swore an oath to the labor movement which stated, in part, "I hereby solemnly promise that I will continue the struggle against low wages, poverty and oppression.… If necessary, we

[34] McConnell-Sidorick, p. 137ff.

Figure 21: Carl Mackley funeral, McPherson Square, 1930. Fortune, *January 1932.*

too will lay down our lives in order that all those who toil may be delivered from industrial enslavement by the un-American, avaricious industrial despots."[35]

Mackley's death and the resulting mass demonstrations swung public opinion firmly behind the union, which ultimately prevailed in the Aberle strike. Unfortunately, however, Mackley would not be Kensington's last union martyr. Tensions again reached fever pitch during the Cambria Silk Hosiery Mill strike of 1933, called by the union to protest "sweatshop conditions" at the non-union mill. Supporters of the strike included Cornelia Bryce Pinchot, the outspoken and progressive wife of then-governor Gifford Pinchot, who visited Knitters' Hall to receive an honorary AFFFHW membership (and who had aspired for a union card "ever since I was a little girl," she told the *New York Times* after the visit).[36] After mill owners were granted a court injunction prohibiting picket lines, further raising the ire of the strikers, demonstrations became more confrontational. For weeks, police escorted strikebreakers and arrested picketers. On August 31st, demonstrations turned violent when a group of armed strikebreakers fired into a crowd of protestors, killing union members Clem H. Norwood and Frank Milnor and wounding two women. A memorial for the slain workers drew 20,000 mourners to Knitters' Hall [Fig. 22].

[35] Palmer, p. 163.
[36] "Mrs. Pinchot Becomes Hosiery Union Member," *New York Times,* Aug. 22, 1933, p. 3.

IN DEMONSTRATION FOR TWO SLAIN IN STRIKE

Above is pictured the head of the line of more than 20,000 strike sympathizers who last night filed past the coffins of Clem H. Norwood, father of three, and 19-year-old Frank Milnor, killed Thursday in the Cambria Mill strike riot. Picture was taken at the entrance to Knitters' Hall, 2530 N. 4th st., where the bodies lay in state. The slow-moving line of sympathizers remained constantly through more than four hours, approximately five persons abreast and more than a block and a half long.

Figure 22: Demonstration in front of Knitters' Hall, Philadelphia Inquirer, *Sept. 2, 1933.*

In late 1933, the union expanded to include seamless hosiery workers and was renamed the American Federation of Hosiery Workers (AFHW). After the merger, the national headquarters were relocated first to 2721 N. 5th Street (1934-1937) and later to 2319 N. Broad Street (1937-1965), but Knitters Hall remained active as a Local 706 union hall and the regional headquarters for the union's powerful Branch 1. The building contained the offices of several notable labor leaders during its tenures as national and regional headquarters, including Emil Rieve, Alexander McKeown, John Edelman, Anna Geisinger, and William Leader, among others.

Rieve, a Polish-born former factory worker and union organizer from Milwaukee, was elected the AFFFHW's first full-time president in 1929 and orchestrated its exponential growth in the 1930s. After resigning in 1939 to head the newly-formed Textile Workers Union of America (TWUA), Rieve also played a pivotal role in the formation of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), serving as its first vice-president and playing a lead role in its merger with

the American Federation of Labor (AFL) in 1955. Upon his death in 1975, the *New York Times* described him as "one of labor's most potent statesmen."[37]

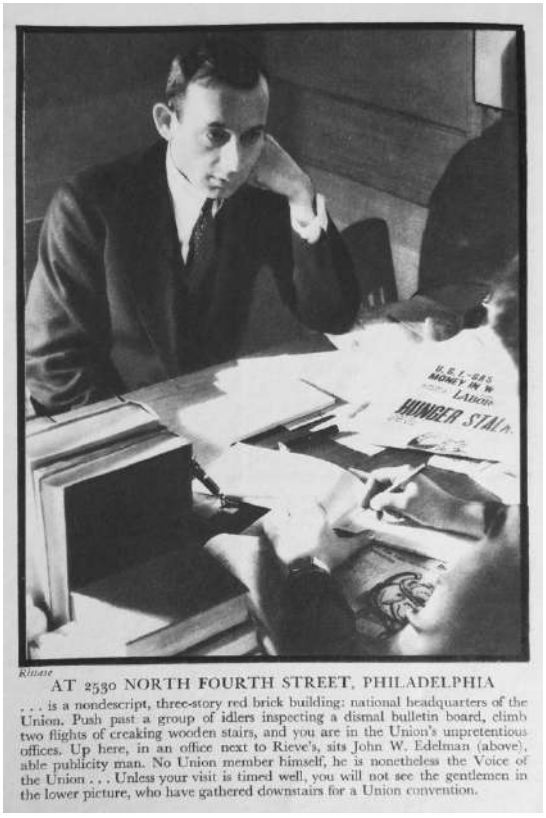
Alexander McKeown, who succeeded Rieve as union president in 1939, was head of Branch 1/Local 706 from 1927 to 1934. Born and raised in Kensington, McKeown began working in hosiery mills at the age of 13 and was one of the hosiery union local's founding members. He also ran for mayor of Philadelphia in 1931 on the Labor Party ticket, a Socialist third party with an office in Knitters' Hall.[38]

John W. Edelman served as the union's director of research and public relations from 1926 to 1937. Born in America but raised on a socialist commune in England after the death of his architect father John H. Edelmann (a close friend and mentor to Louis Sullivan), Edelman was a gifted journalist and strategist who edited the union's bi-weekly *Hosiery Worker* and directed national advertising campaigns promoting union-made hosiery [Fig. 18]. He was also instrumental in planning the union's acclaimed Carl Mackley Houses, a groundbreaking experiment in workers' housing designed by Oskar Stonorov and Alfred Kastner

Rittase

A COUNCIL OF THE CHIEFS

. . . at Union headquarters in North Philadelphia. Left to right: Alexander McKeown, who heads mighty Local 706; William Leader, youngest of the Union leaders and vice president of Local 706; William Smith, secretary-treasurer of the Union; Emil Rieve, president of the Union. Leadership of the Union is largely in the hands of a triumvirate composed of Smith, McKeown, and Rieve. It is a well-balanced and effective combination: McKeown (earnest and impassioned), Smith (dynamic and aggressive), and Rieve (thoughtful and analytical).



Rittase

AT 2530 NORTH FOURTH STREET, PHILADELPHIA

. . . is a nondescript, three-story red brick building: national headquarters of the Union. Push past a group of idlers inspecting a dismal bulletin board, climb two flights of creaking wooden stairs, and you are in the Union's unpretentious offices. Up here, in an office next to Rieve's, sits John W. Edelman (above), able publicity man. No Union member himself, he is nonetheless the Voice of the Union . . . Unless your visit is timed well, you will not see the gentlemen in the lower picture, who have gathered downstairs for a Union convention.

Figures 22-23: Fortune, *January 1932.*

[37] Saxon, Wolfgang. "Emil Rieve, Unionist, Dies; Headed Textile Workers." *New York Times,* Jan. 26, 1975, p. 48.
[38] "Alexander M'Keown of Hosiery Workers," *New York Times,* July 12, 1961, p. 31; McConnell-Sidorick, p. 49.

Figure 24: Carl Mackley Houses, c. 1934. Temple University Special Collections Resource Center

and constructed by the AFFFHW at the height of the Great Depression. Developed in partnership with President Roosevelt's Public Works Administration, the 284-unit apartment complex in Juniata Park opened in 1935 as the nation's first federally-funded public housing project [Fig. 24]. Later in his career, Edelman helped found the National Council of Senior Citizens and was one of the main authors of the original Medicare program.[39]

Anna Geisinger, a Kensington hosiery mill worker, was elected AFFFHW's first female field organizer in 1928. In the 1930s she headed Branch 1's "Committee of 80," which organized major membership drives and strikes across Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the Midwest, and the South. She also chaired a women's division that hosted a popular series of Knitters' Hall lectures and events. Described by the *Hosiery Worker as* "an excellent speaker, with excellent judgment and decision-making skills, and a credit to both men and women in the organization," Geisinger was a regular headliner at union demonstrations and rallies across the country. Her work with the

[39] Edelman, John W. *Labor Lobbyist: The Autobiography of John W. Edelman*. Joseph Carter, editor. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1974, pp. 3, 49; Radford, Gail. *Modern Housing for America: Policy Struggles in the New Deal Era*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 111ff.; "John W. Edelman, Former Head of Senior Citizens Unit, Dies," *New York Times,* Dec. 28, 1971, p. 33

Figure 25: Demonstrations outside Apex Hosiery Company plant at 5th and Luzerne Streets, 1937. George D. McDowell Philadelphia Evening Bulletin Collection, Temple University Special Collections Resource Center

women's committee led to the union's endorsement of equal pay, access to birth control, and other feminist causes long before they achieved mainstream support.[40]

In 1934, William Leader succeeded Alexander McKeown as head of Branch 1/Local 706. Leader is best remembered for his role in the Apex Hosiery Mill strike of 1937, in which 250 union workers staged a dramatic seven-week sit-in at what was then the largest non-union hosiery factory in Philadelphia. Accompanied by demonstrations that drew upwards of 15,000 supporters to the occupied plant, the strikers prevailed in forcing Apex to recognize union demands for representation [Fig. 25]. But in response, Apex sued the union and its leaders for lost income and property damages that resulted from the strike. The case, known as Apex Hosiery Co. v. Leader, resulted in a landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision in favor of Leader and the AFHW, establishing union exemption from the Sherman Anti-Trust Act.

[40] McConnell-Sidorick, p. 92ff.

Deindustrialization and Decline

The Apex Strike was an unequivocal symbolic victory for the hosiery union and the working-class population of Kensington, which overwhelmingly supported the strikers. But by the late 1930s, both the union and the Kensington textile industry were in a period of steep decline. Compounding the general struggles of the Great Depression, changing fashions and the introduction of nylon were rendering silk hosiery factories obsolete, companies were relocating en masse to the American South, and factional infighting within the union were all contributing to the industry's slow but irrevocable demise. Between 1935 and 1941, Philadelphia lost over 10,000 hosiery jobs, and by 1954 the last hosiery factory in the city (ironically, the Apex mill) shut down.[41] The following year, the AFHL closed Local #706 and sold Knitters Hall.[42]

Between 1955 and 1965, the building was owned by the Northside Lithuanian Republican Alliance, a fraternal organization and social club founded in 1909. Little is known about the club or its activities in the building, though in 1963 it was listed as the headquarters of the Aqua String Band, a Mummer's brigade association.[43] In 1965 it was purchased by the Rock of Horeb Pentecostal Church, and it has remained in use as a church into the present. The building has been owned since 2017 by the True Light Pentecostal Church.[44]

[41] Elesh, David. "Deindustrialization," *The Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia.* https://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/deindustrialization/#24971
[42] Deed Book CAB 123 p. 312, George Braig et. al to Northside Lithuanian Republican Club, Sept. 20, 1955.
[43] Deed #438585, Northside Lithuanian Republican Club of Philadelphia to Rock of Horeb Pentecostal Church, April 30, 1965; "Scheffer to Head City String Bands," *Philadelphia Inquirer,* March 15, 1963, p. 33.
[44] Deed #53288773, Rock of Horeb Pentecostal Church, Inc. to True Light Pentecostal Church, Inc., Oct. 25, 2017.

Conclusion

The former Germania Turn-Verein, later Knitters' Hall, is a significant architectural and cultural resource that merits listing on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Satisfying Criterion A, the building possesses significant character, interest and value through its close associations with the Turner movement and, later, the labor movement, both of which contributed to the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of Philadelphia. As Knitters' Hall, the building played a central role in some of Philadelphia's most important strikes and labor demonstrations, including the mass demonstration following union-member Carl Mackley's death in 1930, thereby satisfying Criterion B. Satisfying Criterion C, the building is a rare surviving example of a once-prevalent building type and reflects the architectural characteristics of both the Queen Anne and *rundbogenstil* styles. Finally, the building exemplifies the importance of hosiery manufacturing and the labor movement to the cultural, political, economic, and social history of Kensington, satisfying Criterion J.

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