



“This drum beat the tattoo of liberty, and union, and democracy.”
Pennsylvania Governor George H. Earle

The Turner Drum

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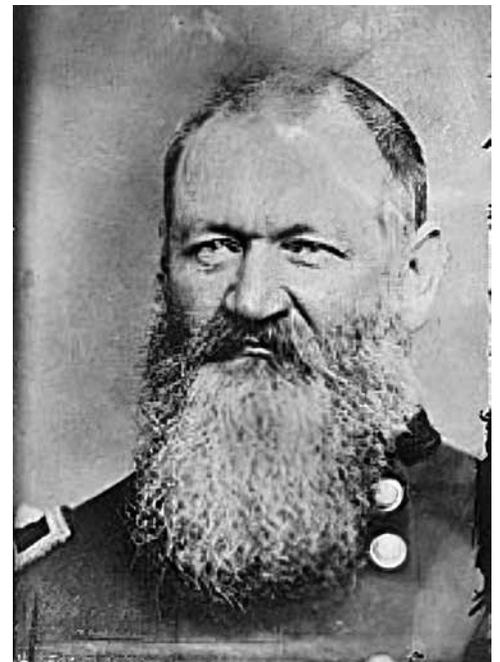
In 1937 the American Turners came into possession of a drum, two drumsticks, and a baton. The gift included two large cloth banners, sewn back-to-back when they were restored in the 1980s. In September 2021 the National Council transferred ownership of the drum, baton, and drumsticks to the New Ulm Turners. (See Figures 1 and 2.)

The drum is said to have been carried by Turners at Lincoln's first inauguration in March 1861. On accepting it in 1937, George Seibel, Turner president, wrote, "Those flags were carried by Abraham Lincoln's bodyguard at his first inauguration. That drum with its rhythmic beat stirred the pulses of the men who surrounded our greatest president when he took his oath of office." For some years, the drum was forgotten, left in the offices of a printing company in Chicago. When it was found and returned to the America Turners in 1986, then Vice-President Ed Colton told the National Convention, "The complete story of these Turners and their belongings is very interesting and an update to our present time should be made a part of our Turner history. A challenge for some interested member looking for something to do!"¹

The Turner Rifles

The Washington, D.C., Turner Rifles played a small, but significant, role in the early months of 1861 as the nation divided politically and plunged into civil war. The capital was located in the midst of slaveholding states and potentially vulnerable to attacks by southern sympathizers. In December 1860 the Army's authorized strength totaled about 18,000 officers and men, with most units assigned to western posts. Washington's defense amounted three hundred marines at the Marine Barracks and a hundred enlisted men at the Washington Arsenal.

The local Turnverein organized a militia following South Carolina's secession and the rebels' occupation of Fort Moultrie, a federal military installation in Charleston harbor. Soon after, on January 9, 1861, the soldiers mustered into service at Turner Hall as District of Columbia militia. The Rifles, "a new German volunteer company," were commanded by Captain Joseph Gerhardt (*right*). Gerhardt was born near Bonn in 1817. During the 1848 Revolution he commanded a battalion of volunteers in the revolt in Baden. After Prussian troops quelled the riots, Gerhardt was imprisoned in Rastatt fortress but managed to escape to Switzerland. In 1850 he left Switzerland without his family and came via New York to settle in Washington. There, he opened the Germania Hotel with a beer garden and restaurant. After his friend, Adolf Cluss, organized the Socialist Turner Association in Washington in 1852, Gerhardt served as speaker and president. At a time of political turmoil, he was active in the new Republican Party, leading to an assault on his



Joseph Gerhardt

1 *Minutes of the Sixty-first National Convention of the American Turners, August 3-6, 1986: 11-12.*

establishment in June 1857. This pattern of violence against immigrants led many Turner societies to hold regular military drills and target practice. Gerhardt was a delegate to the 1860 Republican convention that nominated Lincoln for president and he campaigned for the ticket through that fall.²

Why were these Turners so quick to enlist in the Union cause? George Brosius, one of the leading proponents of Turnerism, recalled, “When Lincoln called citizens to arms to defend the Union, the Turners were there to heed the call with great enthusiasm.” Looking back at the German revolutions of 1848, Turners recognized that the United States was the great hope for liberal democracy. The *New York Herald*, describing that state’s United Turner Rifle regiment, stated:

Nearly if not all its members have been engaged in the revolution of '48 in the fatherland. . . . Though defeated in their efforts to free their country from the despotic yoke of tyranny, they are not disheartened, and the spirit of freedom still burns within their breasts, and seeing the land of their adoption about being despoiled by a rebel horde, they have determined to offer their services to perpetuate that Union.³

Turners also supported progressive movements and the organization’s constitution declared, “Slavery is unworthy to a republic and is opposed to all the principles of freedom.”⁴

On February 23, 1861, Abraham Lincoln arrived in the nation’s capital under a cloud. Following a reported attempt to kidnap or kill the president-elect when he passed through Baltimore, Lincoln took a night train from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, to Washington. By the time of his inauguration on March 4, 1861, seven states had passed secession ordinances and formed the Confederate States of America. Carl Schurz, a prominent Turner, wrote, “The air was still thick with rumors of rebel plots to assassinate Mr. Lincoln, or to capture him and carry him off before he could take hold of the reins of government.” The *New York Herald* warned, “Already the border slave States of Maryland and Virginia are preparing to march a body of armed men to the federal capital to prevent the inauguration of the new President and to break up the government.”⁵

The threats were real. Local paramilitary companies, sympathetic to the Confederate cause, drilled in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia. One, the National Rifles, had been supplied with weapons by the Secretary of War, John Floyd, shortly before his resignation from the cabinet to return to Virginia. A powerful secret organization, known as the Knights of the Golden

2 *Washington (D.C.) Evening Star*, June 13, 1857, January 11, 1861, April 13, 1886. *Washington (D.C.) National Republican*, January 11, 1861; “Death of General Joseph Gerhardt,” *Washington (D.C.) Evening Star*, August 20, 1881. Note that Adolph Cluss was from Heilbronn, where he went to school with Wilhelm Pfänder of New Ulm.

3 *New York Herald*, May 7, 1861.

4 *Sixth Convention of the Socialist Turnerbundes of North America, Held in Pittsburgh, Pa. from September 1st through 5th, 1856*, 12; George Brosius, *Fifty Years Devoted to the Cause of Physical Education, 1864-1914* (Milwaukee, Wis.: Germania Publishing Company, 1914), 12. Jacob Nix, later a key founder of New Ulm, told the 1855 convention, “Death and destruction to slavery and its partisans!”

5 Carl Schurz, Frederic Bancroft, and William Archibald Dunning, *The Reminiscences of Carl Schurz: 1852-1863* (New York: McClure Company, 1907), II, 219; *New York Herald*, January 1, 1861.

Circle, looked for opportunities to prevent the Lincoln from taking office. Joseph Medill, Lincoln's friend and the editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, sent a warning to him, "The evidence of my ears and eyes are forcing me to believe that the secessionists are seriously contemplating resistance to your inauguration in this capitol. There is certainly a secret organization in this city numbering several hundred members having that purpose in view."⁶

General Winfield Scott, commander of the federal army, was a staunch Unionist. On December 31, 1860, he appointed Colonel Charles Stone as inspector general for the District, handing him the task of organizing local military units. Scott told him, "We are now in such a state that a dog-fight might cause the gutters of the capital to run with blood." There was no militia, so Stone quickly reached out to prominent civic leaders and clubs for assistance in raising volunteers. The Turner Rifles were among the first to respond and by March 4th, there were nearly 2,000 soldiers on hand. Stone also employed a network of spies to infiltrate the pro-Southern militias. On the evening before the inauguration, Stone received word of a threat to place a bomb under the platform where Lincoln would take the oath.⁷

Concerned about potential violence on inauguration day, General Scott arranged for a show of force along the route from the Willard Hotel, where Lincoln was staying, to the Capitol. Sharpshooters were stationed on rooftops along Pennsylvania Avenue and artillery companies took up positions on prominent street corners. The procession included more than a dozen local militia units, including the Turner Rifles. The *National Republican* reported that seventy-eight soldiers from the Rifles marched, "their new uniforms and equipments showing finely, and their soldierly appearance making a decided impression." Another report stated that their uniform was a "gray frock coat, fatigue caps, and black pants with gold stripe." Contemporary sources did not place the Turners next to the presidential carriage, and a sketch done for *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* shows Lincoln surrounded by mounted district marshals with marching troops leading the way. Decades later, historian Allen C. Clark placed the Turners "before, behind, and at the sides of the carriage."⁸ (Figures 3 and 4)

The immediate proximity to the president — whether fifty feet or fifty yards — is of minor importance. The presence of these soldiers dissuaded plotters from carrying out their attacks. After the war, Colonel Stone said, "These were the troops which insured the regular inauguration on the

6 Joseph Medill to Abraham Lincoln, December 26, 1860, Abraham Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. For background on Lincoln and his inauguration, see Harold Holzer, *Lincoln President-Elect: Abraham Lincoln and the Great Secession Winter 1860-1861* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008). For the plots against Lincoln, see David C. Keehn, *Knights of the Golden Circle: Secret Empire, Southern Secession, Civil War* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 2013).

7 Charles P. Stone, "Washington on the Eve of the War," in *The Civil War*, edited by Charles L. Barstow (New York, N.Y.: The Century Co., 1920), 3-18; James H. Whyte, "Divided Loyalties in Washington during the Civil War," *Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Washington, D.C.*, 60/62: 105-106;

8 *Washington (D.C.) National Republican*, March 5, 1861; *Washington (D.C.) Evening Star*, February 22, 1861; *Washington (D.C.) Journal*, August 8, 1924; Allen C. Clark, *Abraham Lincoln in the National Capital* (Washington, D.C.: Press of W. F. Roberts Company, 1925), 13.

steps of the Capitol of the constitutionally elected President. I firmly believe that without them, Mr. Lincoln would never have been inaugurated. I believe that tumults would have been created, during which he would have been killed, and that we should have found ourselves engaged in a struggle, without preparation, and without a recognized head at the capital.”⁹

On April 11, 1861, these local militia units were mustered into federal service for a ninety-day enlistment in a ceremony conducted by Assistant Adjutant General Irwin McDowell. McDowell would be appointed commander of the Army of Northeastern Virginia in May 1861 and lead the army into its first major battle at Bull Run on July 21, 1861. The Turner Rifles numbered seventy-nine volunteers that day and were “accompanied by a drum corps.” The following day, April 12th, was one of the most momentous in American history. Before dawn, Confederate artillery began shelling Fort Sumter, a federal military installation in Charleston, South Carolina. Three days later, Abraham Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to “suppress the rebellion,” sending shock waves across the country. On April 18, a Virginia convention met and voted to leave the Union. The threat to Washington was now on the opposite shore of the Potomac River with only the D.C. militia for its defense. That same day, however, the first of the new Union volunteer units entered in Washington and the following day, the Sixth Massachusetts Infantry arrived after being attacked by a mob in Baltimore. By April 20, only eight days after the attack on Fort Sumter, more than 30,000 troops had reached Washington.¹⁰

The Turner Rifles remained a vital part of the growing army. Gerhardt kept recruiting and, within a few days, the ranks grew to 115. A second company, under Captain Włodzimierz Krzyżanowski, a Polish revolutionary in exile, was mustered in late April.¹¹ The two companies merged with the Washington Rifles, commanded by Turner Arthur Balbach, to become the Eighth Battalion, District of Columbia Militia, on May 3, 1861. In mid-May, at the White House, the battalion passed in review before the president and gathered dignitaries, including Secretary of State William Seward, Secretary of Treasury Salmon Chase, and Secretary of War Simon Cameron. The *National Republican* reported, “The President expressed himself as being highly gratified at the really fine appearance made by the military generally, and was particularly struck by the martial bearing of an eight-footer in the ranks of

9 Charles P. Stone, “Washington on the Eve of the War,” 13; *Washington (D.C.) Critic*, March 8, 1886. See *Washington (D.C.) Evening Star*, April 10, 1886, for a review of the early militia units in Washington, D.C. For a description of the guard duty on March 4, 1861, see *The Sunday Star (Washington, D.C.)*, February 6, 1916.

10 *Washington (D.C.) Evening Star*, April 10, 1886; (Richmond, Va.) *Daily Dispatch*, April 13, 1861, notes four drummers in the unit.

11 Krzyżanowski was born in Poland and enlisted on April 11, 1861, quickly rising in the ranks. He remained in the military through October 1865, serving at Gettysburg and on the assault on Missionary Ridge in Chattanooga, Tennessee. *National Tribune*, July 9, 1885.

the Turner Rifles, whose head towered far above that of any other member of his company. A general laugh was created as the President pointed out the gallant soldier.”¹²

Over the next several months, the Eighth Battalion was posted to protect Washington’s public buildings and bridges. After a Virginia referendum ratified secession on May 23, 1861, Lincoln sent troops before dawn the following day to seize the city of Alexandria. The Eighth was stationed to guard the Long Bridge over the Potomac River — a vital crossing into Virginia. The troops met no resistance and the streets were empty, but in a dramatic gesture, twenty-four-year-old Col. Elmer Ellsworth of the New York Fire Zouaves climbed on the roof of a local hotel to take down its Confederate flag. Coming down with his prize, Ellsworth was shot and killed by the owner. Young and handsome, Ellsworth became the first martyr to the cause and his body lay in state in the White House. On July Eighth, just before their three-month enlistment ended, the Eighth Battalion was sent to guard the city’s water supply at Great Fall, Maryland. A small detachment of Confederate soldiers attacked, leaving two Union soldiers dead. These were among the earliest U.S. casualties inflicted by secessionist troops.¹³

After their ninety-day terms of service ended, the Eighth Battalion mustered out, with many of these Turner soldiers joining newly-organized regiments of the Union Army. Gerhardt was appointed major of the 46th New York Volunteers. In 1863 he resigned from the army for health reasons and returned to Washington. He continued to be a well-known hotel and innkeeper until his death. Krzyżanowski was named as colonel of the 5Eighth New York Infantry. He served through the war and later was named first U.S. administrator of the newly-acquired territory of Alaska.¹⁴

The significance of the Eighth Battalion is expressed in descriptions of their service in late nineteenth century accounts:

The records show that before there was a single soldier from the north mustered into federal service at the outbreak of the war, the troops of the District were guarding the public buildings, the bridges, roads and ferries. When it was feared that there would be an outbreak at the inauguration of

12 *Washington (D.C.) National Republican*, April 12, 23, May 14, 1861; *Evening Star*, May 14, 1861. Balbach was born in Baden and came to the U.S. in 1851.

13 *Washington (D.C.) Republican*, July 9, 1861: “A message arrived here at an early hour yesterday morning, bringing information of a skirmish which had taken place during the day previous at Great Falls, between Major Gerhardt’s command, Eighth German Battalion, of about 200 men, who were stationed on the Maryland side of the river at Great Falls, and a much larger force of Secessionists, who were posted all along the other side of the river. The battalion was then under command of Capt. Krzyżanowski, of Company B, Turner Rifles, Major Gerhardt being in the city.”

14 “Joseph Gerhardt,” *Freie Presse fur Texas*, September 3, 1881.

President Lincoln, it was the District militia that marched with loaded muskets, stationed themselves on housetops, and guarded the public buildings, prepared for any emergency.¹⁵

Colonel Charles Stone wrote, "I think that the country has never properly appreciated the services of those District of Columbia volunteers."¹⁶

The Columbia Turners

During the Civil War, the Washington Turners went dormant after many members enlisted to fight. Two years after the war, the Columbia Turners formally reorganized, with many veterans of the Eighth Battalion returning to the club. Although the unit had only 325 soldiers, most of its members remained in the District of Columbia after the war. These veterans maintained their friendships at annual reunions and participation in Decoration Day ceremonies (later known as Memorial Day). In 1881 they organized the Veteran Association of the Eighth Battalion, District Volunteers. In April 1886, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of their muster, the association held a well-attended parade with other

15 *Washington (D.C.) Evening Star*, September 21, 1892.

16 Charles P. Stone, "Washington on the Eve of the War," 12.



Eighth Battalion, April 12, 1886

D.C. militia units. The old soldiers gathered for a photograph, displaying two drums, one of which is possibly the Turner drum.¹⁷

Forty-two years after the Civil War, in 1907, references to the Turner drum begin to appear.

Washington Herald, December 29, 1907

Mr. [Rudolph] Sauer Honored

He came to this city, where he joined the Social Democratic Verein, which had its headquarters at Four-and-a-half and Maine Avenue. When Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated as President on March 4, 1861, the Turners formed his bodyguard on his visit to the Capitol and back again to the White House. Mr. Sauer was one of the members marching in that line and keeping step to the beat of the drum, which now is in possession of the local society as a precious souvenir. When the war broke out, the Turners, forming the Eighth Battalion of the defenders of the National Capital, sustained the first two deaths in an outpost skirmish on the Big Falls.

Washington Herald, February 22, 1909

The Turners' section of the [Taft] Inauguration parade, which will bring up the rear of the United German Societies, will be of more than ordinary interest. They will carry their three flags and an ancient drum. Flags and drum were carried by the Turners in the inauguration parade of Lincoln at which the Turners formed part of the personal escort of the immortal President. When the call to arms was sounded in the 60s, the local Turners were among the first to respond and they claim the honor that their soldier members were among the first to die on the battlefield in defense of the Union.

Washington Herald, March 14, 1911

Nine Survivors Will Call on the President

Proud of their loyalty to the Stars and Stripes when danger threatened the country, the surviving members of the Eighth Battalion will pay their respects to President Taft in a few days to invite him to be their honored guest at a banquet. . . . The old tattered flag which was carried by these German veterans and one of the drums and other wartime relics which now occupy places of honor in the turn hall will be used in the decoration.

Washington Herald, October 29, 1911

Columbia Turnverein to Observe Anniversary

The members of the Turnverein answered the call of President Lincoln for volunteers. . . . Relics of those days, proudly exhibited at their hall at 928 M Street, consisting of tattered battle flags, drums,

¹⁷ *Washington (D.C.) Evening Star*, November 19, 1881, April 12, 1886. The *Washington Post*, May 11, 1912, noted, "The Columbia Turnverein still keep the old flags, drums, and other war relics of the Eighth Battalion." The *Washington Critic* (April 12, 1886) reported, "At the head of the squad of veteran survivors were two old warriors bearing drums, which they beat as if they liked it."

muskets, & c., form part of the invaluable treasures of the Turnverein.

Washington Evening Star, May 29, 1912

Members of the Eighth Battalion section of the Columbia Turnverein placed flowers over the graves of their comrades in the Civil War in Prospect Hill Cemetery. Col. John A. Joyce was the principal speaker. A bugle call and the sounding of the old drum, used during the war by Eighth Battalion, concluded the services.

These are almost certainly references to the Turner drum. It was prominently displayed in a 1916 newspaper photograph. (See Figures 5 and 6.)

The American Turners and the Drum

The Columbia Turners dissolved as an organization in 1917. At the closing, Frederick Mann, secretary of the Turnverein, took the drum and four flags. Following his death in 1935, they passed into the hands of his friend, Alvin Meissner. Born a decade after the war, Meissner was an active Turner and worked as Head Designer of the Engraving Division of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. He was responsible for hundreds of stamp designs as well as a special commemorative set of stamps and envelopes for the 100th anniversary of the founding of the American Turners.¹⁸ (Figure 8)

In the summer of 1937 Meissner transferred the items to the president of the Turnerbund, George Seibel. At the time, Seibel was the director of the Carnegie Library in Pittsburgh. Envisioning a national Turner museum and archives, he stored items at the library and invited visitors “to inspect the collection of books on Turner history and the interesting Jahn relics now housed there.” Seibel wrote, in *American Turner Topics*:

The other day I received two boxes by express. One box was about twelve feet long, and in it were four flags. The other box was about three feet square, and in it was an old drum. They came from the city of Washington. Those flags were carried by Abraham Lincoln’s bodyguard at his first

¹⁸ It is not clear why the Columbia Turnverein closed its doors, but president Christian Heurich, Sr., was a target of investigations after America’s entry into World War I. In his memoirs Heurich noted, “I was, in the opinion of these people, a master spy, an intriguer, a German propagandist, a fearful and dangerous person.” Christian Heurich, *From My Life: 1842-1934* (Washington: 1934), 133-134. Mann engineered the purchase of a new Turner hall in 1909 and, after the Turnverein’s demise, apparently took possession of its contents. Mann and Meissner attended several of the annual banquets honoring the veterans of the Eighth Battalion. *Washington (D.C.) Evening Star*, April 12, 1913, April 14, 1914.

inauguration. That drum with its rhythmic beat stirred the pulses of the men who surrounded our greatest president when he took his oath of office.¹⁹

Today, the drum remains in that same box with Alvin Meissner's name and address in the upper left hand corner. A few months later, the flags and the drum were "rededicated" at a ceremony that featured an address by Pennsylvania Governor George Earle.²⁰

The flags and drum provided powerful symbols of the Turners' service to their country — the United States of America. It was a time of dramatic change for the organization, faced with a backlash against its German roots fueled by the rise of Adolf Hitler to power. Concerns were so great that George Seibel wrote a letter to Turner President Carl Weideman in January 1938, warning of an attempt by several San Diego Turners to display the flag of Nazi Germany in their hall. In response, that year, the national convention changed the organization's name to the American Turners, confirming the results of a national referendum that strongly approved the shift. A convention resolution stated:

Be it resolved, that the American Turnerbund most vigorously condemns all subversive doctrines and activities also utterly opposes the dissemination of these subversive and unAmerican propaganda and pledges itself to resist with all its power any encroachment upon American liberties; demands equality and tolerance for all races and creeds, and dedicates itself anew to a struggle for the great principles of Turnerism — liberty, tolerance, reason and justice.²¹

The official publication, renamed *American Turner Topics* in 1936, introduced a new logo and adopted the motto, "Turnerism is Americanism."²²

The drum was nearly lost, however. After Seibel stepped down as president, he remained as chair of the Jahn Fund. A museum and archive, kept in Pittsburgh at the library, grew to include daguerreotypes of Father Jahn, a variety of Jahn-related documents and books, and a beaded purse made by Jahn's wife. At Seibel's death, however, Jahn Fund records were moved to the offices of its new president, Rudolph Koenig, at the Revere Photoengraving Company in Chicago. Then, when Henry

19 George Seibel, "Turners the Bodyguard of Lincoln and Liberty," *American Turner Topics* (August 1937): 1-2, "Precious Relics of Lincoln," *American Turner Topics* (July 1937): 4. *Topics* stated that Seibel had been aware of the drum and flags before the gift and "knew they were in safe hands." Meissner was reported to be writing a history of the drum, but no such document has been found. Also see *Ninetieth Annual Report of the National Executive Committee, 1940*: 18.

20 "Governor Earle's Tribute to Lincoln's Turners," *American Turner Topics* (February 1938): 1-2.

21 *Official Minutes of the 37th Convention of the American Turnerbund held at Detroit Socialer Turnverein, July 1-4, 1938*: 17-19.

22 "Change of Name," *American Turner Topics* (January 1939): 2-3; George Seibel, "Why We Fall for Militarism and Breakfast Foods," *American Turner Topics* (April 1938): 3; George Seibel to Carl Weideman, January 18, 1938, Box 18, Folder 45, American Turners Records, 1853-2002, Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives, University Library, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis.

The Turner Drum

Schroeder became President of the Jahn Fund in 1977, he moved the records to New York, but the neglected flags and drum were left stored in a closet at the Koenig's office.²³

In the early 1980s Carol Koenig, Rudolph's daughter-in-law, was cleaning up the company facilities and discovered the flags and drum. She was a member of the American Turners and recognized the insignia on the flag and thought the flags and drum might have some historical value. She contacted William Meyer, past national president, and then shipped the items to Eldon Zahm, the national president, in 1986. That year, at the National Convention, the Cultural Education Committee discussed the drum and flags.

Restoration of Turner Flag and Drum. Motion by Barb Davis (ILL) seconded by Betty Barnes (CS) to restore flag and drum and be displayed at two consecutive Turner Turnfests and be donated to public historical society or museum. Entire motion carried.

The National Affairs Committee ended with a motion to turn the artifacts over to the National Council to further investigate restoration. Meyer wrote, "The drum was then restored by Forrest Steinlage and the flag was shipped to a professional restoring service in Toledo, Ohio. At that point the drum was in terrible shape and the flag was in rags and thought to be beyond repair."²⁴

The drum, baton, and the flags were stored at the Illinois Turner Camp for several years, then transferred to the national office in Louisville. For nearly a decade, the drum was exhibited at the Frazier History Museum in Louisville. Most recently, it was stored at the national office in Aurora, Illinois. The flags remain in the possession of the American Turners.

The American Turners voted to transfer the drum to the New Ulm Turners at their 2021 National Council meeting. New Ulm is a Turner town, authorized by the 1856 national convention to establish a colony on the frontier. Its hall is the oldest in its original use in the United States. Wilhelm Pfänder, a key founder of New Ulm, Cincinnati, and Heilbronn Turnvereins, served as a Lincoln elector in the landmark 1860 presidential race. Like other Turners, dedicated to free speech and free labor, New Ulm Turners strongly opposed the secession of the southern states and quickly passed resolutions in support of the Union. They immediately began military training on the grounds and members were among the first to volunteer to fight. At the battle of Shiloh in April 1862, under the command of Colonel Pfänder, the 1st Minnesota Artillery held the line in the face of a surprise attack on the Union Army, saving the day. Given this history, it is an appropriate home for this relic.

²³ *American Turner Topics*, December 1937, February 1945, December 1946. In 1978 Turner National Historian Mark Schroeder tried to track down these items at the Carnegie Free Library and reported that they could not be located. "Moving," *American Turner Topics* (March and April 1978): 5.

²⁴ William R. Meyer, "Civil War Flag and Drum," typescript, December 1, 2007.

The Drum

The drum itself is a piece of evidence, including a label, found inside the drum and viewed opposite a small vent hole in the side. The label is damaged with the middle section missing.

This is almost certainly from G. L. Wild & Bros., a major wholesale and retail company in Washington, D.C. The firm did not begin business until late 1865, after the end of the Civil War. Born in Prussia in 1834, George L. Wild is listed in the 1860 census as a piano maker in Warrenton, North Carolina. He first appears in a Washington city directory in 1864 where he is listed as a piano tuner. In October 1865 he begins to advertise as Geo. L. Wild & Bro. Piano Manufactory. One advertisement, in December 1865, issues of the *Evening Star*, reads that he “would inform his friends and the friends of music generally that he has separated from [G. W. Metzertott’s Music Store] and in connection with his brother commenced business on his own account.”²⁵ In the 1870 city directory, the firm advertised: “Geo. L. Wild & Bro., 420 11th Street, between Pennsylvania Avenue and E Street, Washington, D. C., Manufacturers and Dealers in Pianos, Organs, and Musical Instruments generally. Pianos, Organs, and other Musical Instruments Rented, Exchanged, Packed, Moved, Tuned and Repaired.” Wild moved his business to 1315 7th Street N.W. in 1895, and the following year, left the family firm, afterwards known as L. P. Wild & Son. (Figure 15)



The construction of the drum offers no conclusive evidence as to its age since there were few changes over the years. During the Civil War, there were no governmental or military standards for drum construction. Drums were made primarily in the important industrialized centers of the Northeast: Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. Calfskin or sheepskin heads were tensioned by rope, laced either through holes in the wood hoops or through cast hooks clasped over the hoops. Tension was applied by sliding the tugs or braces down.²⁶

Looking at other examples, there are several period drums with an inlaid star pattern. Gettysburg College Special Collections has a drum, said to date from the late Civil War years. It was made by one of the leading manufacturers of the era, Stratton and Foote of New York. Other similar drums appear in museums and private collections. (See Figures 9-14.)

25 *Alexandria Gazette*, October 31, 1865; *Washington (D.C.) Evening Star*, December 1, 1865.

26 Chet Falzerano, “Historic Collectible: Civil War Drums,” *Drum Magazine*, <https://drummagazine.com/historic-collectible-civil-war-drums/>

Conclusion

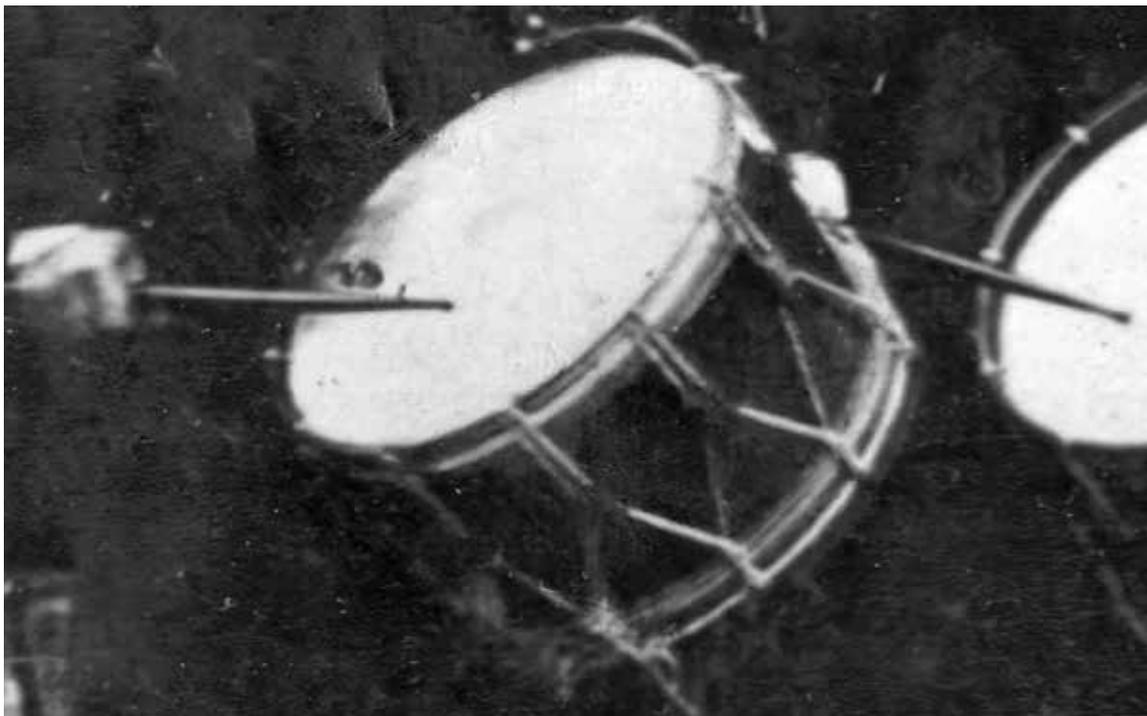
The Turner Rifles, a company of the Eighth Battalion, District of Columbia Militia, played a small, but significant, role in the nation's capital in the early months of 1861. Did the beat of this drum keep time as these soldiers marched to the capitol on March 4, 1861? There is a reliable chain of ownership for the drum back to the Veterans Association of the Eighth Battalion, District Volunteers. The claim of its use at Lincoln's inauguration relies on the memory of Rudolph Sauer, who served in the Turner Rifles, as well as that testimony of other veterans who informed the newspaper reports of "the ancient drum."

The label found inside the drum raises some concerns. If the drum was manufactured by G. L. Wild and Bro. Company, it would have been made after the Civil War, purchased for use by the veterans, and then mythologized as the years past. Since Wild's business was located at 1315 7th St. N.W., as the label reads, only between summer 1895 and late spring 1896, it seems unlikely that the drum was purchased just a decade before the veterans repeatedly referred to it as the "Lincoln" drum. That claim would have been easily refuted. More likely, it was simply repaired by the popular music company.

Forrest Steinlage, former Turner National Historian, summarized it accurately in 1987 when he wrote, "This drum belonged to the Washington, D.C. Turners who served in the Civil War and who acted as Abraham Lincoln's bodyguard at his inauguration in 1861." It is one of the most treasured artifacts of American Turner history.²⁷

The Turner Drum

Figure 1: Turner drum (above) and 1886 Eighth Battalion drum (below)



The Turner Drum

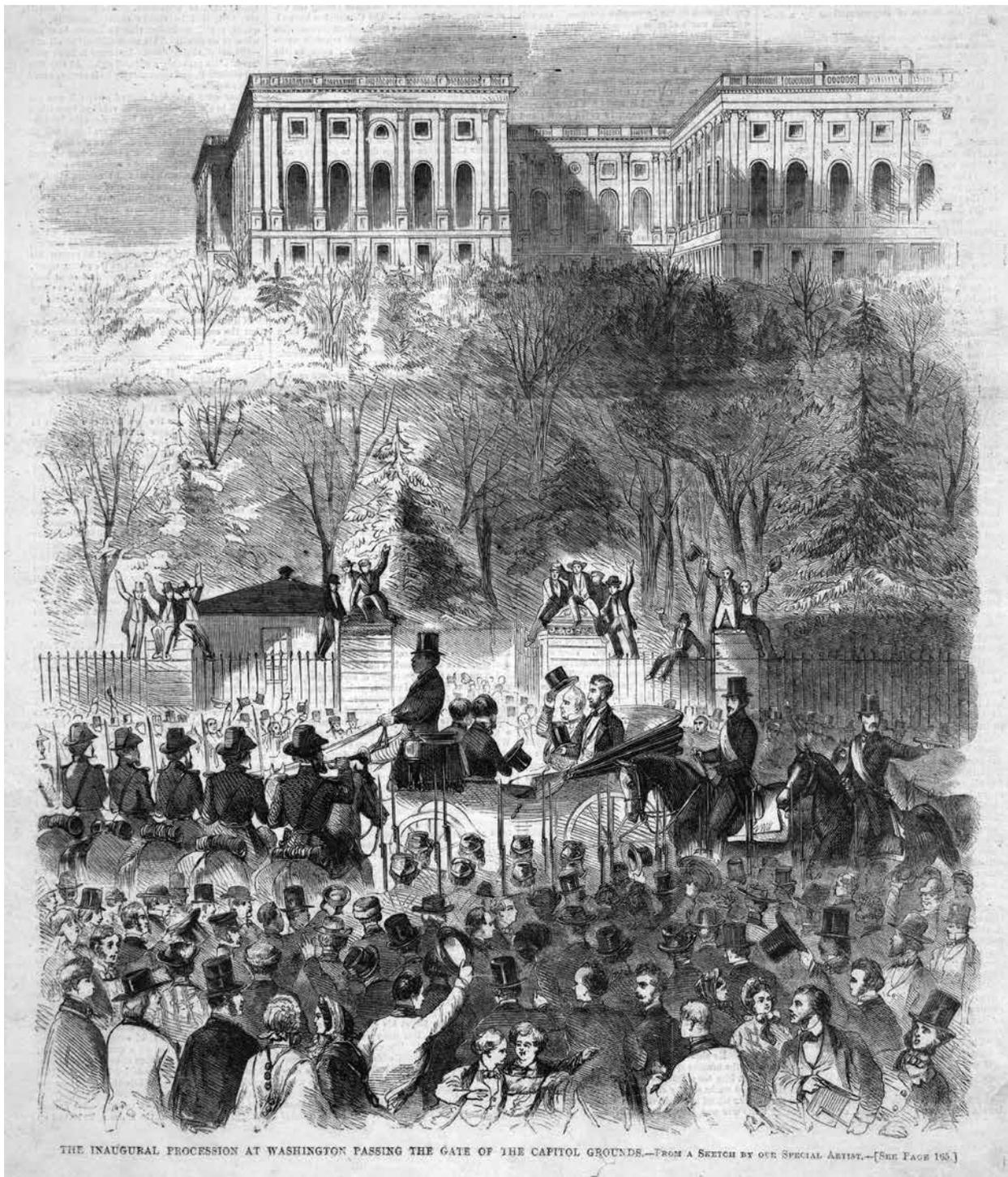
Figure 2: Columbia Turner Flags

These were in a deteriorating condition when returned to the American Turners in 1986. During restoration, the two flags were sewn back-to-back and framed.



Figure 3: Lincoln's First Inauguration

Library of Congress



THE INAUGURAL PROCESSION AT WASHINGTON PASSING THE GATE OF THE CAPITOL GROUNDS.—FROM A SKETCH BY OUR SPECIAL ARTIST.—[SEE PAGE 165.]

Figure 4: Lincoln's First Inauguration

Library of Congress

His address appealed to the southern states to peacefully end their rebellion. He said, "The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield, and patriot grave, to every living heart and hearthstone, all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."



The Turner Drum

Figure 6: Lincoln's Turner Bodyguard

Turner Topics, April 1938

After acquiring the drum and flags in 1937, the American Turners, through the Jahn Fund, printed this poster and distributed it to every club.

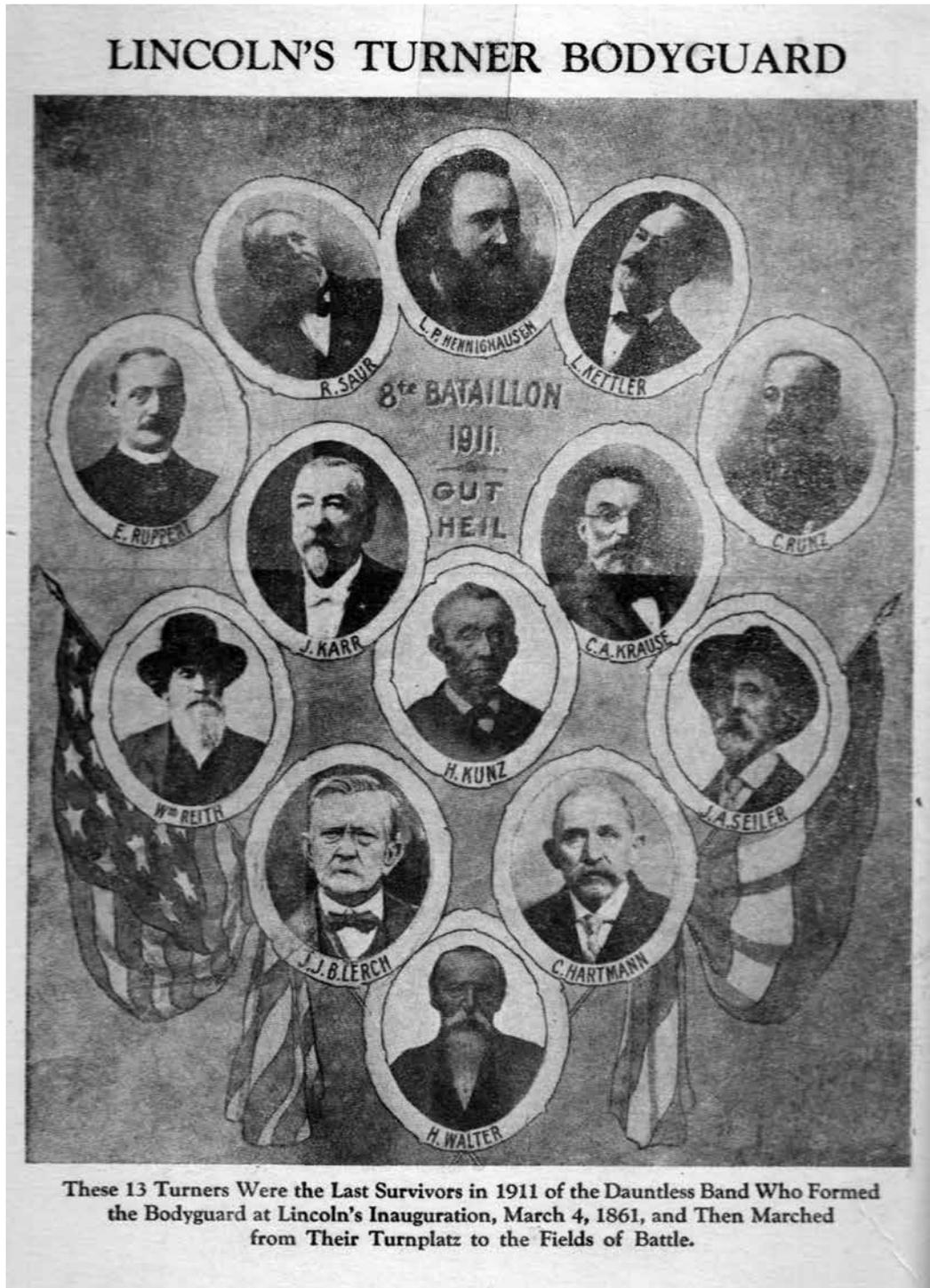
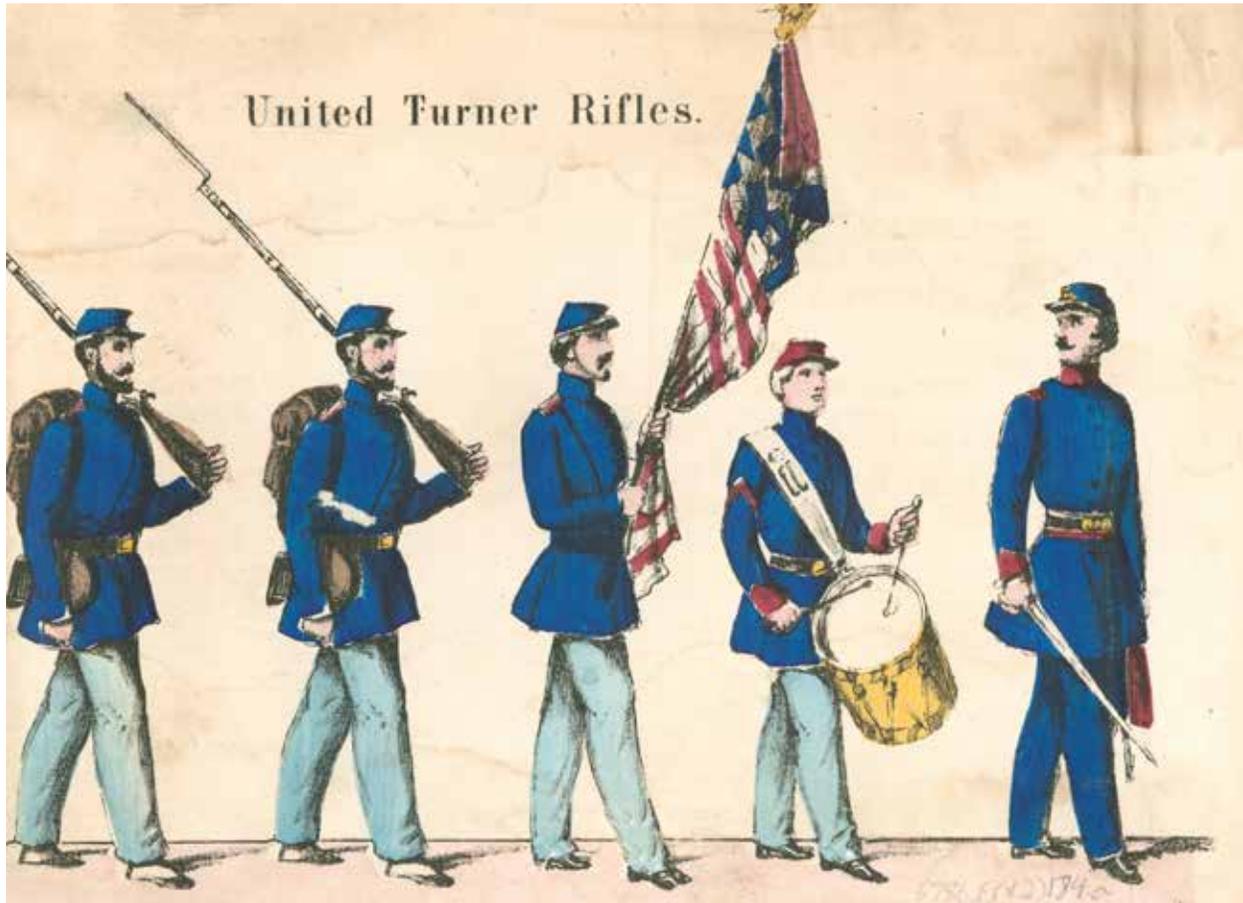


Figure 7: United Turner Rifles

Library Company of Philadelphia

Although the Eighth Battalion mustered out of service in July 1861, other Turners organized military units. The 20th New York Volunteer Infantry, also known as the “Turner Rifles,” is the best known. The vast majority of recruits came from the various German-American Turner societies.



The Turner Drum

Figure 8: Turner 100th Anniversary Commemorative Envelopes and Stamp

Private Collection

These are two examples of the Turner commemorative envelopes and stamp designed by Alvin Meissner. Meissner played a crucial role in preserving the drum, transferring its ownership to the American Turners in 1937.

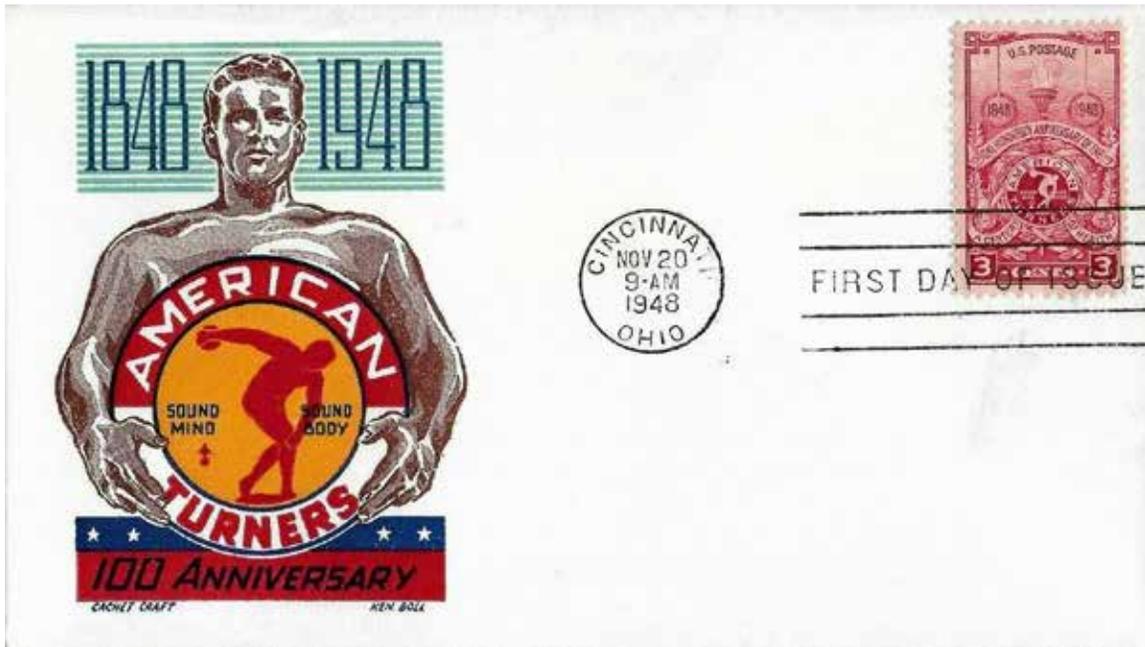


Figure 9: Drum manufactured by Stratton and Foote, New York, New York
Gettysburg College Special Collections



Figure 10:
Private collection



Figure 11: Manufactured for J. W. Pepper & Sons, likely made by Soistman Company, Philadelphia
Gettysburg National Museum



Figure 12: Drum manufactured by Sempf & Ottes, New York. By tradition, this drum was carried thru the Civil War by the father of Capt. Harry Bryant, 23rd Regiment, Brooklyn.

Private Collection



Figure 13: Drum manufactured by Soistmann Company, 241 North Second Street, Philadelphia

Private Collection

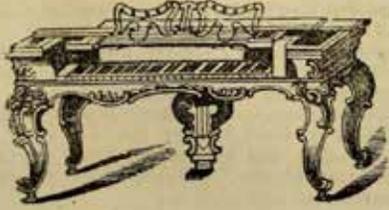


Figure 14:

Private Collection



Figure 15: George L. Wild & Bro. Advertisement
Washington (D.C.) City Directory

GEORGE L. WILD. **LOUIS P. WILD.**
GEORGE L. WILD & BRO.
AGENTS FOR
WILKENS' PIANOS,
AND
CARHART & NEEDHAM'S
PARLOR ORGANS,
AND MANUFACTURERS OF AND DEALERS IN
**MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS,**
AND
MUSICAL MERCHANDISE GENERALLY,
497 Eleventh St., (West Side,)
Bet. Penn. Av. and E Street,
WASHINGTON, D. C.

