

S0037 Frei Gemeinde Von St. Louis (1850-1972)
Records, 1850-1972
33 Folders, 4 Microfilm Rolls

MICROFILM

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Edward Petrikovitsch donated the records of the Frei Gemeinde von St. Louis to the Western Historical Manuscript Collection on April 27, 1976 and August 30, 1977.

The "Freie Gemeinde von St. Louis" translates as the Free Congregation of St. Louis by a group of German immigrants, both the North St. Louis group and the South St. Louis group were a part of a national organization in America. The organization, after selling its last assembly building in 1961, continued to meet in members' homes until 1972 when the remaining 6 members disbanded the group. The books in the library of the organization were donated to Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville and to the Missouri Historical Society in St. Louis when the last assembly building was sold in 1961.

The history of the Freie Gemeinde roughly parallels the history of German immigration into the St. Louis area, both in terms of numbers of members and in prosperity and influence. Devoted to a rationalist philosophy, the organization held meetings, conducted a German School Association and a library. In keeping with the fraternal aspect of the association, they engaged in business ventures together and operated a cemetery as a part of an insurance plan for members. Many of the members were also later members of the Socialist Party of St. Louis and of Camp Solidarity, the Socialist Party summer camp located outside of St. Louis at Pacific, Missouri.

See also:

S0451 Hecker, Friedrich (1811-1881), Papers, 1825-1987

S0184 Camp Solidarity Inc. (1937-), Records, 1937-1978

FOLDER LIST

BOX 1 (020966)

1. Protocol Book, 1850-1875
2. Correspondence Copy Book, 1859-1867, includes newspaper clippings and ads
3. Marriage Register, 1855-1863
4. Freie Gemeinde First Missouri Republican Ticket, 1860
5. Financial Ledger, 1851-1878
6. Cash Book, Member Dues, 1859-1869
7. Concordia Cemetery Record of Interments, Record of Shares, Financial Ledger, School Building Lots, 1862-1867

8. Concordia Cemetery Day Book of Lots Sold, 1862-1868
9. Protocoll Book, 1865-1876
10. Protocoll Book, 1877-1885, 1862-1865 Cemetery
11. Protocoll Book, 1887-1893
12. German School Account Book, 1878-1891
13. German School Cash Book, 1878-1892
14. Protocoll Book, 1893-1901
15. Protocoll Book, includes correspondence, 1901-1913

BOX 2 (020968)

16. Membership List, 1898-1909
17. German School Book Catalog, 1905
18. German School Financial Ledger, 1933-1950
19. Protocoll Book, 1942-1970
20. Protocoll Book, 1970-1972
21. Minutes, 1965-1971
22. Membership, 1923-1960
23. Cash Book, 1952-1961
24. Finances, 1951-1973
25. Tax Status and Tax Returns, 1922-1974
26. Financial Ledger, 1960-1972
27. Dissolution and Disposal, 1964-1974
28. Articles of Association, 1884; Charter, 1857; Constitution, 1865
29. Correspondence, 1858-1973
30. Histories, 25th and 50th Anniversary, 1875 and 1900
31. American Humanist Association, 1965-1970
32. German Liberty Union, 1936
33. Rationalist Society of St. Louis, 1964-1967
34. Photocopy of Book "St. Louis in Earlier Years, Book of Memoirs for the Germans" by C.D. Kargau, St. Louis, 1893(German)

4 MICROFILM ROLLS

CATALOG LISTING OF MEETING PROTOCOLL BOOKS

TRANSCRIBED AND TRANSLATED

1. Protocoll Book 1850-1865, in: Box 1, folder 1. pgs. 5-6 - Prot. 1, Nov. 6, 1850: formation of German School Association, and a "Free, Independent Church" wherein "The church sermons will be preached with Reason and according to Our Age (transcription and translation); pgs. 7-8 - Prot. 2, Nov. 16, 1850: two committees formed, one to oversee building of a schoolhouse and church, the other to "draft the By-Laws for the Church and School" (transcription and translation); pgs. 11-13 - Prot. 4, Jan. 4, 1851: offered building lot to be purchased and initial \$1,000 building fund raised, directors for 2 years and 1 year elected, C.F. Gebbers appointed Speaker and Teacher (transcription and translation); pgs. 21-2 - Prot. 9, July 20, 1851: Committee approves Free Congregation Festival Program (transcription and translation); pg. 23 - Prot. 10, July 27, 1851: Franz Schmidt Declined to

speak due to poor health, festival program revised (transcription and translation); pgs. 24-5 - Prot. 11, Oct. 19, 1851: Festival to be organized for Founder's Day, to benefit the German Free School (transcription and translation); pgs. 26-7 - Prot. 12, Dec. 7, 1851: Congregation votes to dismiss the teacher Mr. Gebbers, Festival honoring Thomas Payne to be held (transcription and translation); pg. 34 - Prot. 16, Feb. 29, 1852: Board decides to wait til Mr. L deking arrives from New York before electing a new teacher (transcription and translation); pgs. 35-6 - Prot. 17, March 17, 1852: Carl L deking elected the new teacher (transcription and translation); pgs. 48-9 - Prot. 32, Jan. 16, 1853: additional, higher class added to school, along with other changes (transcription and translation); pg. 77 - Prot. 67, May 4, 1855: H. B rnsteins Philodrama Company to be supported by Free Congregation (transcription and translation).

2. Protocoll Book 1865-1876, in: Box 2, folder 9. pg. 26 - Prot. 288, April 8, 1866: Collection of Funds for Construction of Hall at 17th & Dodier (transcription and translation); pg. 39 - Prot. 300, Sept. 30, 1866: additional funds needed to finish new building (transcription and translation); pgs. 68-9 - Prot. 325, Sept. 1, 1867: Furnishing and Dedication of new School Building (transcription and translation); pg. 102 - Prot. 349, April 19, 1868: Solicitation of Loans to Reduce Debt Load (transcription and translation); pg. 115 - Prot. 361, Aug. 16, 1868: Decision to Sell Concordia Cemetery (transcription and translation); pg. 129 - Prot. 374, Feb. 4, 1869: Sale of Concordia Cemetery to Mr. Evers concluded, graves to be moved to Bellefontain Cemetery (transcription and translation); pg. 135 - Prot. 380, March 14, 1869: Approval of Preparations to Move Graves to Bellefontain Cemetery (transcription and translation); pg. 165 - Prot. 411, Oct. 28, 1869: Sending of Delegate to Free Thinkers Conference in Naples, Italy, support money pledged by congregation (transcription and translation); pg. 171 - Prot. 417, Dec. 16, 1869: Contract to Rent Schoolhouse to St. Louis Public School Board, rent set at \$100 yearly payments (transcription and translation); pg. 173 - Prot. 418, Dec. 23, 1869: Text of Contract with St. Louis School Board submitted (transcription and translation);

3. Protocoll Book 1877-1885, in: Box 2, folder 10. pg. 19 - Prot. 763, July 5, 1877: Fritz Sch tz plans lecture tour, Free Congregation members should select a topic from list of 24 available topics (transcription and translation); pg. 44 - Prot. 793, Feb. 14, 1878: Speaking Tour of Max Grossmann of Milwaukee (transcription and translation); pg. 49 - Prot. 799, March 28, 1878: Proposed Union of the Free Congregation with the Liberal League, 408 Washington Ave. (transcription and translation); pg. 51 - Prot. 801, April 11, 1878: Proposed Union with the Liberal League to be discussed further (transcription and translation); pg. 154 - Prot. 921, April 19, 1880: Terms of Lease of the Free Congregation School Building to the St. Louis School Board determined (transcription and translation); pg. 185 - Prot. 956, April 28, 1881: Donations raised for the Hecker Monument in Benton Park (transcription and translation); pg. 198 - Prot. 981, Oct. 27, 1881: Pictures of Garfield, Lincoln, Washington, Hecker and Heinzen will be framed and hung in the Free Congregation Hall, 20th & Dodier Streets (transcription and translation); pg. 310 - Prot. 1083, Oct. 25, 1883: Dedication Festival for New Hall, German classes of Blair Public School to be held in Free Congregation Hall (transcription and translation); pg. 317 - Prot. 1089, Dec. 6, 1883: 33rd Foundation Anniversary Festival to be held (transcription and translation); pg. 393 - Prot. 1155, March 26, 1885: Funeral Arrangements to accompany Body of Free Congregation Speaker Carl L deking (body cremated in Lancaster, Pennsylvania), Congregation pays bill for coaches rented for the L deking Funeral Procession (transcription).

4. Protocoll Book 1887-1893, in: Box 2, folder 11. pg. 10 - Prot. 1237, March 10, 1887: Mr. Biron, Editor of "Arminia" in Milwaukee, will give a Lecture in St. Louis at end of March (transcription); pg. 7 - Prot. 1234, Feb. 17, 1887: Louis Teuteberg submits manuscript copy of his Lecture "On The Future Of The German Language in America", to be published under the auspices of the Free Congregation (transcription); pgs. 53-4 - Prot. 1283, March 22, 1888: Congregation resolves to order books written by free-thinker authors in the English language, as advertised in the "Boston Investigator" (transcription); pg. 154 - Prot. 1389, Oct. 16, 1890: Painting Contract give to Louis Brueckner, various other items discussed (transcription); pgs. 190-1 - Prot. 1424, July 2, 1891: various sundry items discussed, especially that 282 empty wine bottles were turned in for a profit of \$14.10! (transcription).

5. Protocoll Book 1893-1901, in: Box 3, folder 14. pgs. 43-4 - Prot. 1522, Jan. 25, 1894: Report submitted, stating that the Free Congregations of North and South St. Louis had agreed to merge into one organization, naming a combined committee of 5 members from North and 4 from South St. Louis to represent their common interests. (transcription); pgs. 65-6 - Prot. 1548, July 28, 1894: August Rode resigns from the building committee because Mr. Junghans had said that he (Rode) would sign anything in exchange for a glass of whiskey. Mr. Junghans demands investigation of this matter, to be considered at the next board meeting (transcription); pgs. 66-8 - Prot. 1549, Aug. 2, 1894: Mr. Mankel said that he heard Mr. Junghans say, while tossing down a drink at the Congregation Hall Bar after the last meeting, that August Rode would endorse any bill just for a glass of whiskey. Upon the comment that Mr. Junghans' words could be verified by the bartender, Mr. Junghans replied angrily by denouncing Mr. Mankel as a liar. Mr. Fred Anmiller was named as the second witness (transcription); pgs. 68-9 - Prot. 1550, Aug. 5, 1894: Mr. Anmiller stated he was not present when the conversation in question between Mr. Mankel and Mr. Junghans took place. The Board then concluded that Mr. Mankel's statement against Mr. Junghans could not be verified and that Mr. Junghans and Mr. Rode should try to make up and be friends again. The Secretary was instructed to send a letter to this effect to both men (transcription); pgs. 133-4 - May 7, 1896: To Balance the Budget, it was decided to Reduce the Speaker's Salary, so that Mr. Hempel would receive \$1200 per year. This was immediately accepted by Mr. Hempel (transcription); Between pgs. 162-3 - Brochure: "Draft of a Constitution for a Federation of Free Congregations and Free-Thinker Societies of North America", April 8, 1897 (transcription); pg. 201 - Board Meeting, Oct. 6, 1898: Congregation will participate in festivities commemorating the Unveiling of a Schiller Monument in St. Louis Place (transcription); Between pgs. 244-5 - from "Mississippi Bl tter", Jan. 7, 1900: Report for the Year 1899 of the German School Association and Free Congregation (transcription).

6. Protocoll Book 1901-1913, in: Box 3, folder 15. pg. 10 - Sept. 19, 1901: Statement of Condolence on Death of Pres. William McKinley and Condemnation of the Assassin, clipping of printed statement from the "Westliche Post" (transcription); pg. 31 - Clipping of Protocoll of the 15th Session, Aug. 23, 1902, of the Federation of Free Congregations and Free-Thinker Societies of North America: membership dues paid in, written draft of the International Congress of Free-Thinkers read off, and it was resolved to revise this and present the draft for ratification to the Congregations. Position taken to Resist Introduction of Religion Classes in the Public Schools. Treasurer's Report presented (transcription); pg. 55 - Sept. 1, 1903: glued-in pamphlet announcing the Convening of a "International Congress for Progressive World Opinion" (transcription); pg. 65 - Clipping of Protocoll of the 9th Session,

Feb. 17, 1904, of the Federation of Free Congregations and Free-Thinker Societies of North America: Turner Society of Schenectady, N.Y. wants to establish a Free-Thinker Sunday School, Invitation to International Free-Thinkers Congress in Rome presented by the Secretary Mr. Leon Furnemont, the "F d ration Internationale de la Libre Pens e" in Brussels (Belgium) publishes all items from the St. Louis Congress, and will do the same for the Rome Congress, Mr. Vogtherr, Publisher of Free-Thinker Literature in Stettin (Germany) will come to St. Louis in October, Treasurer's Report presented (transcription); pg. 95 - May 11, 1905: Pres. August Hoffmann reported that no board members were present for the funerals of F. Lueckensmeyer & Hermann Holmann, as this is not allowed when clergy actually give the euology (transcription).

7. Protocoll Book 1942-1970, in: Box 4, folder 19. pgs. 4-5 - Jan. 15, 1943: Yearly Report delivered, which stated that Dodier Hall would be sold all activities concentrated in the New Home of the Congregation at 2218 St. Louis Ave., balance in bank account reported at \$12,312.19. (transcription); pg. 19 - Oct. 15, 1943: Financial Report presented, Decision made to buy \$5,000. Worth in U.S. Gov. Bonds (transcription); pg. 37 - Nov. 17, 1944: Congregation notified by City Treasurer's Office that they must purchase 1,000 gallons of gas ration coupons, Affidavit of Finances for I.R.S. turned over to Mr. Koerner (transcription); pg. 61 - Aug. 2, 1946: Lease on Convent Street Property signed with Lever Bros. Co., Free-Thinkers League of North America in Milwaukee calls a Convention to discuss the Future of the League, what can be done to improve the organization of the Free-Thinker Movement in America (transcription); pg. 69 - Feb. 21, 1947: Announcement that the Free-Thinkers League in Milwaukee Convention voted to dissolve the organization and to donate 80% of its assets to "Arbeiter Wohlfahrt" and 20% to the "Austrian Friends of Labor Committee" (transcription); pgs. 216-217- Dec. 7, 1960: Account Books to be Revised on Jan. 11, 1961, decision to support Meeting of Mr. McCall from the Rationalist Federation in London to be held in the Fall 1961, desire to sell the Meeting House of Free Congregation, at 2218 St. Louis Ave. (transcription); pgs. 218-219 - Jan. 15, 1961: Yearly Financial Report read, Congregation had total assets of \$39,000, Congregation voted \$200 towards Costs of Lecture Tour of Collin McCall and to work more closely with the Rationalists, Ethical Societies, Humanists and Unitarians on this (transcription); pgs. 229-231 - Oct. 11, 1961: House on St. Louis Ave. already sold, letters of thanks from the Director of the Missouri Historical Society and S.I.U. acknowledging receipt of donated German language books and magazines (transcription); pgs. 242-3 - March 21, 1963: Walter Hoops named as Delegate from the Congregation to attend the International Congress of the World Federation of Free-Thinkers to be held in Duisberg, W. Germany, July 26-9, 1963, Hoops to receive \$100 travel costs for same (transcription); pgs. 290-5 - Oct. 24, 1969: Preparations begun to dissolve the Free Congregation "...to become effective at such time as less than seven of the twelve present members of the Association are surviving" (English typescript).

8. Protocoll Book 1970-1972, in: Box 4, folder 20. pgs. 11-14 - Oct. 23, 1970: Assets reported as being \$27,811.23., resolved to distribute assets to the Ethical Society of St. Louis, as being agreed upon by the members as the only organization corresponding to the beliefs held by the Free Congregation members (English typescript).

List of Pamphlets, in Box 5, folder 30:

1. Booklet "Historical Information on the German School Association and the Free Congregation of St. Louis", 50th Anniversary 1850-1900 (German), by Max Hempel,

Speaker of the Free Congregation;

2. English translation of Hempel booklet, by I. Goessel, June, 1976;

3. "The Triumph of the Free Thinkers: The Freie Gemeinde von Nord-St. Louis", paper (14 pgs.) by Steve Rowan, presented at the Missouri Conference on History in St. Louis, April 12, 1985;

4. Lecture "Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Foundation of the Free Congregation of St. Louis" by Carl L deking, Speaker of the Free Congregation, held in the Congregation Hall at 17th & Dodier Streets on Nov. 7, 1875;

5. Pamphlet "By-Laws and Statement of Principle of Association of Free Congregations and Free-Thinker Societies of North America" (circa 1900);

6. Pamphlet "Freie Moral" (Free Morals), by Hugo Wuelfing, Chicago, 1931;

7. Pamphlet "Platform and Constitution of the Socialist Labor Party", New York, 1886.