

In February 1852 the Madison Männerchor was founded by twelve charter members, and has been in continuous existence. The original singers were also talented musicians and through their public performances were able to attract new members from both German and other nationalities. Singing societies soon became established in other Wisconsin towns, and in 1856 Milwaukee organized the first Saengerfest for the German choirs in the state.

In the late 1850s some singers with prior military training in Germany formed a group called Schuetzen Verein (Riflemen). Little did any realize how soon their drilling would be put to the test. After the Civil War, the Männerchor joined the newly established Northwestern Sängerbund, which included 50 to 60 choirs in Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana and Nebraska. The post-war Saengerfests were large affairs and when Madison hosted the event in 1881 there were 1200 singers and between five and six thousand guests.

A memorable event took place in the history of the Madison Männerchor on October 11, 1887 when President and Mrs. Grover Cleveland visited Madison. Shortly after midnight, the choir paid tribute to the President and First Lady with a moonlight serenade. They both seemed highly pleased and the President announced



that he too, was a member of a singing group — the Buffalo Liederkrantz.

Unfortunately a fire destroyed the Männerchor's home at Turner Hall in Madison in 1940, resulting in the destruction of irreplaceable memorabilia and history. Numerous friends came to our assistance and provided the Männerchor with some music and other donations so our rehearsals could go on until we had adjusted ourselves to our loss.

In recent years, the tradition of a statewide competition was revived by longtime Männerchor member Paul Essert. His idea of a traveling trophy for the winner took hold with other choirs in the state and in 1977, in honor of our 125th anniversary, the Männerchor donated a silver trophy to the Wisconsin Sängerbund to re-start the singing competition.

The choir has always continued to grow and evolve and over time included among its members governors, senators, judges, congressmen, and many local notables. The Männerchor celebrated its 160th anniversary at its spring concert in May 2012 and received a proclamation honoring the choir from the governor and a flag which had been flown for the choir above the Capitol in Washington, DC.

