

## Guide to the German Relief Association Records

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### **Descriptive Summary:**

Creator: Unknown

Title: German Relief Association Records

Dates: 1870-1941

Quantity: 10 linear feet

Abstract:

received a single-payment death benefit. Initially, members had to be German or sons of Germans who spoke German and lived at the time of application in Mobile. Some exceptions were allowed. A few of the Association's attending physicians were not of German decent. Finally, in July 1916 the Association decreed that members could include non-Germans and non-German speakers.

The association's attending physician verified the health of the applicant before entry and certified if a member qualified for sick benefits and for how long. A member applying for sick benefits from outside of Mobile was required to have a notarized doctor's statement to qualify. Death benefits were seventy-five dollars for spouses and members with less than fifteen years of membership. Members with over fifteen years of membership recieved a benefit of one-hundred and fifty dollars increasing fifty dollars for every five years of continued membership thereafter.

The organization had an active social s(1 Tw -44.12(o)2(ci)-18(a)-4(l)-18( )1(s(1jn)-11(u)-10Aty)-20(n)74

The German Relief Association was unique in many respects. The members represented all walks of life; judges, lawyers, cotton brokers, merchants, barbers, cigar makers, dyers, and skilled laborers, to name a few professions. Members were rich and poor, one a Yale graduate and others barely literate; they were Jewish, Protestant, and Catholic. Sick benefits were paid to members in California, Texas, Arkansas, and Illinois. Members who had left Mobile twenty years or more would have their remains returned to

Charles Wassmuth joined the Association in April 1875 and was a member until his death in 1886. He was Secretary from January 1877 to December 1877. He was elected secretary for 1878, but only served in January. He also uses a refined script indicating education.

Charles Brettel joined in August 1882 and died April 1913. He was secretary from January 1892 to December 1892.

Oscar E. Teichmann joined the Association in December 1889. He was a barber by profession. Teichmann would serve forty-six years as secretary (January 1893 to January 1939). He was devoted to the Association, and his life would reflect its growth and decline. Teichmann would draft the minutes of the meetings on tablet paper in pencil and then record them in ink in the minute books, financial ledgers, and membership registers. He compiled the membership registers, annual and cumulative reports from the minutes.

Charles G. Bitzer served as Secretary from January 1939 to June 1941.

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### **Scope and Contents:**

This benevolent organization was active in Mobile from 1866 to 1941. The collection is in both German and English, with English used after 1917. Included are minutes, membership lists, correspondence, and other material relating to the organization from 1866 to 1943. Three of the

**Preferred Citation:**

German Relief Association Records, The Doy Leale McCall Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of South Alabama, Mobile, AL.

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**Content List:****Boxes 1-22**

Leather bound books, registers, and ledgers. The binding and spines of these books are generally in poor condition. The paper in these books is of good quality and in fair to good condition. The entries are hand written in ink. Inserted between pages of the minute books

under the Ausgeschlössen indicate members who were dropped for non-payment of dues or resigned.

18. Membership dues record book, 1926-40.

19. German. A history of the society, 1870-91, compiled from the minutes and recorded by Charles Brettel.

20. English. Building Certificate Shares, August 1901-April 1919. To pay for building the hall and repairs the association sold shares for ten dollars. When the treasury balance exceeded ten dollars the shares were paid off by lottery.

21. Some German. Membership register, 1870-1915.

22. English. Membership register, 1871-1938. The definitive listing of members entry, resignation or death. Originated in 1904 by O. Teichmann and Fred Graves.

### **Box 001**

English and German.

- Constitution and by-laws with a typed English translation. Later amendments in German.

## **Box 004**

English.

- Correspondence files, 1899-1941. On the back of one letter is a receipt for tomato catsup.

- Newspaper clippings, including obituaries, officer elections, etc. An advertising campaign by a bank referred to noted Mobilians as customers. Two ads cite association members and include their pictures.

The correspondence consists primarily of requests for sick benefits and doctors' certification of illness or injury. By the 1920s many members lived throughout the United States. Some of the appeals for benefits can be very descriptive and moving. Of special significance in this file is a handwritten copy of a hostile letter dated April 25, 1918, that threatened the Association if it continued to use German in its name. At a special meeting held April 30, 1918, c 0.003 T 0.003428(1)s7(u)-14i .