

History of the Lancaster Liederkrantz Hobby Chor

1978 - 2008

When the Liederkrantz still enjoyed the ambience of the old clubhouse located at the base of Cabbage Hill, it was visited by the Lüdenscheid *Männer Quartett*, an all male chorus from Sauerland, Westphalia, Germany on Thursday October 17, 1978. They gave an outstanding performance. The group consisted of approximately 75 voices and sang typically German classic songs and hymns. Following their formal performance, approximately 20 of the men, singing mountain, sailor, drinking and folk songs, broke out in two- and four-part harmony to the accompaniment of an accordion. They performed with gusto and great fun. The smaller group called themselves *Der Hobby Chor des Lüdenscheider Männer Quartetts*, signifying a fun chorus singing just as a hobby.

Gerry Nikolaus, a long standing member of the Liederkrantz, was so impressed with the small group that he approached Peter Knapp, then president of the club, requesting whether he could invite club members to form a similar group here in Lancaster. Peter agreed to his request. A number of Liederkrantz members, including Peter Knapp, Peter Heim, August Schulz, Matthew Gegg, Wilmer Eshelman, Heiner Stoll, Ernst Rinder, Carl Draude, Bob Woodbridge, George Heymann, Heinz Schwarz, Emil Goepfrich, Gerd Markow, Joe Weiss and John Hershey responded to Gerry's invitation. As Gerry recently noted, "To the best of my recollection these 17 men, who began singing together as a "Chor" in 1978, were the charter members."

Within a month, the group, singing *a capella*, began meeting upstairs and later in the former recital hall downstairs where George Heymann accompanied the group on the piano. However, it should be noted that more than a few members of the Chorus were concerned that the pioneering group would detract from and otherwise compete with the Chorus, the foundation of German music at the Liederkrantz. Although this never actually happened, nevertheless some Hobby Chor members dropped out early.

Working from selected songs featured by the Lüdenscheid Hobby Chor, the local group wrote the words on 3 x 5 cards, as they chose not to use songbooks. At the monthly club meeting held in the rathskeller on April 5, 1979, 15 members calling themselves the Lancaster Liederkrantz Hobby Chor made their public debut. Peter Heim was the director and George Heymann was the accompanist. From all reports, the group was very well received. Shortly thereafter Gary Simond, Tommy Markow, Bob Bishop and Tom Ziegler joined the group making a total of 19 first year members. Tommy began looking for accordion music to accompany the group.

Additional first year public appearances included a Friday night performance at the Nordöstlicher Sängerbund *Sängerfest* (convention) held that year in Hershey and during a band break at one of the club's well attended dances.