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Butts, Porter

Madison, Wisconsin: The Wisconsin Union, 1978

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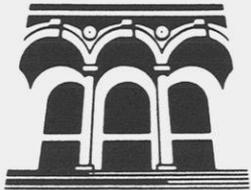
THE MEMORIAL UNION
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Der Rathskeller +
Der Stiftskeller

1928-1978

A guide published by
THE WISCONSIN UNION
in 1978 on the occasion of
the 50th anniversary of the
opening of the Memorial
Union Building at the Uni-
versity of Wisconsin -
Madison.

Photos by Gary Saffitz
Sketches by Kurt Schaldach
Text by Porter Butts



1928-1978

THE WISCONSIN UNION

A Half-Century of Constructive Involvement

Der Rathskeller . . . Wunderbar

The Rathskeller is the most famous room of Wisconsin's Union--possibly of any university union, except for the debate halls of the Oxford and Cambridge Unions in England.

HOW IT ALL CAME ABOUT

One of the reasons is it celebrates "gemutlichkeit"--comradship, congeniality, a warm feeling of well-being. At first, for a dozen years after the Union opened in 1928, fellowship and a cheerful existence seemed a good idea for men only. This can only be understood now if one remembers that for a hundred years unions had been men's clubs--indeed, universities generally, here and abroad, were primarily for men. Furthermore, Wisconsin women had clubrooms of their own and a "Tea Room"--nearby in Lathrop Hall (no men).

So it was that in the 1930s the Rathskeller was a gathering place for men--for refreshment, for small talk and big talk, for chess and schafskopf, for study, for reading the newspapers, sometimes for sleeping. If a girl wandered in by mistake, she was greeted with frowns, and left.

But the room was more than a rest stop. There were

old time silent movies every Saturday night, plus "The Eyes and Ears of the Rathskeller", a campus newsreel hurriedly put together each week by the Rathskeller Committee; "Cheese Night", every Sunday, with a Union chef carving slices from a 50-pound "daisy", or wheel, under a spotlight in the center of the room--for free; radio broadcasts of out-of-town football games; billiard exhibitions by world champions Charlie Peterson and Willie Hoppe in the center of the room, surrounded by portable bleachers set up stadium fashion.

ENTER THE WOMEN, GRADUALLY

There were, however, certain concessions to the girls. They could come for refreshments (if accompanied) during the Great Hall matinee dances on Saturday afternoons. They were there in formal dress for late suppers on the nights of Prom and Military Ball. The Union Women's Affairs Committee in 1934 fought for equal (though still separate) facilities, established the "Katskeller" in a small room next to the Rathskeller (never a success), and then won approval for a refreshment center for women, with or without dates, in the Paul Bunyan Room across the hall--a push button buzzer signaling a Rathskeller counter atten-

dant to come over to take, and deliver, orders for food and drinks.

By 1937 women could use the main Rathskeller room at will during the summer session (there were many more women than men enrolled in the summer). In 1939 the student body was polled on the question of admitting women year 'round. At first, both men and women voted "no," the women themselves saying men "ought to have a place of their own." Then opinion gradually shifted; and with the start of the war and disappearance of men the Union Council approved, in 1941, the use of the room by women after 2:30 p.m. each day. This soon gave way to use around the clock, and despite some raised eyebrows by returning veterans, the room became thoroughly co-educational.

NOW, THE SOCIAL HEART OF THE UNION

This, plus wide-ranging programs by inventive student committees, made the Rathskeller the social heart, truly, of the building. New on the scene: "Danskeller"—dancing every Friday and Saturday night to a combo or records (25¢ per couple) on a portable dance floor set up under the main archway. . . polka parties, with all chairs and tables cleared back from the center of the room. . . Sunday evening sings . . a string orchestra playing Strauss waltzes ala the Viennese and Bavarian beer gardens. . . fires in the

fireplaces on winter Saturday afternoons, with popcorn parties and marshmallow roasts. . . fires, in fact, whenever students wanted to light them (no wood now, too expensive). . . Christmas and New Year's Eve parties, especially for stay-at-homes and foreign students. . . free coffee for the marching band that led rooters to the Union after football games. . . all-freshmen suppers, followed by cheerleaders introducing them to Wisconsin cheers and songs . . . folk singers, combos, and an "open mike" for other talented students. . . election returns via TV. . . Fasching, with as many as 6,000 streaming through the room to celebrate the German version of Mardi Gras with singing, dancing, and general high-spirited revelry.

* * * * *

BEER

Another reason for the Rathskeller's fame, of course, is that it has served beer since 1933 when Congress declared 3.2 beer (by weight) non-intoxicating--Wisconsin the first public university to authorize beer on the campus. For all the years since, whenever Wisconsin's Union was mentioned in faraway places, the first reaction was likely to be "Oh, that's where they serve beer." Legend has it that more Iowa students attended Wisconsin football games than any other, as much to sample beer in the Rathskeller as to see the game.

In the beginning the Union did its best to assert the



FASCHING -- THE FAMOUS GERMAN PRE-LENTEN FESTIVAL -- AS CELEBRATED IN THE RATHSKELLER, COMPLETE WITH OLD-TIME BAVARIAN BAND



EAST FIREPLACE -- THE MERRY SIDE OF STUDENT LIFE



WEST FIREPLACE -- THE SERIOUS SIDE OF STUDENT LIFE

MURALS PAINTED BY EUGENE HAUSLER IN OIL ON DRY PLASTER (SECCO) IN 1928, RESTORED BY KURT SCHALDACH IN 1978

authenticity of the ancient German beer halls. It installed the old mahogany bar from the now defunct Hausmann Brewery on State Street, which had been the resting place for Wisconsin elbows for decades. It even sprinkled sawdust on the floor, only to find the dust churned up and got into the soup and hamburgers (therefore quickly abandoned). And it provided handsome fluted glass steins with thumb grips (at \$1 each) which disappeared en masse in the first few weeks. That ended the beer stein era. But the Union's reputation for beer and *gemutlichkeit* never diminished.

* * * * *

THE DECOR

Another source of the Rathskeller's fame, of course, has been the room itself, with its soaring arches, its spandrels, and the *alte deutsche* murals of student life and German mottoes that give it a very special atmosphere.

The fact that the room became a "Rathskeller" was quite accidental. It was first labeled in the blueprints "Taproom"—because the Michigan Union had a men's "Taproom", so it was assumed Wisconsin's ought to have one, too. But when Leon Pescheret, the Union's French-born interior designer who was quite familiar with central Europe, first saw the bare room in 1927, he said, "Why, this looks like a Rathskeller." "What's a Rathskeller?" we asked. The answer: the cellar of a German Rathaus,

or village hall, where the city fathers gathered after work for fellowship and refreshment.

This suited us just fine, because we had already resolved to build into the Union wherever we could a recall of the state's heritage. One obvious, prominent heritage: the rich German cultural and *gemutlich* tradition centered in Milwaukee. And here at the Union, indeed, was the cellar of the campus village hall, expressly designed for fellowship and refreshment.

So Pescheret was given a free hand to design heavy oak tables (sandblasted for antique effect and inviting carving) and old-time strap iron light fixtures reminiscent of a Rathskeller; and he was asked to prepare with Eugene Hausler, the painter-foreman on the job, sketches for *alte deutsche* murals depicting the main facets of student life--social activity, study, athletics, forensics, student government, journalism, drama, music. Hausler, trained in Germany as a young man and quite familiar with Rathskeller decor, executed the murals and German mottoes. In 1978 Kurt Schaldach of Milwaukee, another German-born painter, removed the 50-year accumulation of dust and grime and restored them to their original brilliance.

A GUIDE, IN ENGLISH

The following pages are a guide to what the murals show and what the German legends say.



FORENSICS
← PAGE 10

ATHLETICS
← PAGE 10

PAGE 11 → DRAMA

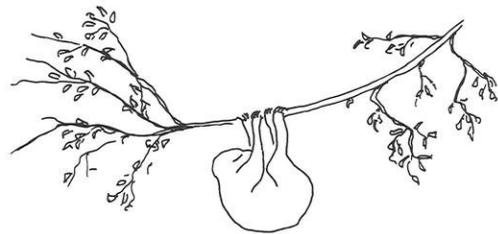
PAGE 11 → MUSIC





A TOAST WITH THE RATTLE OF THE SALAMANDER!
TO JOLLITY AND GOOD FELLOWSHIP.

ONE! TWO! THREE!



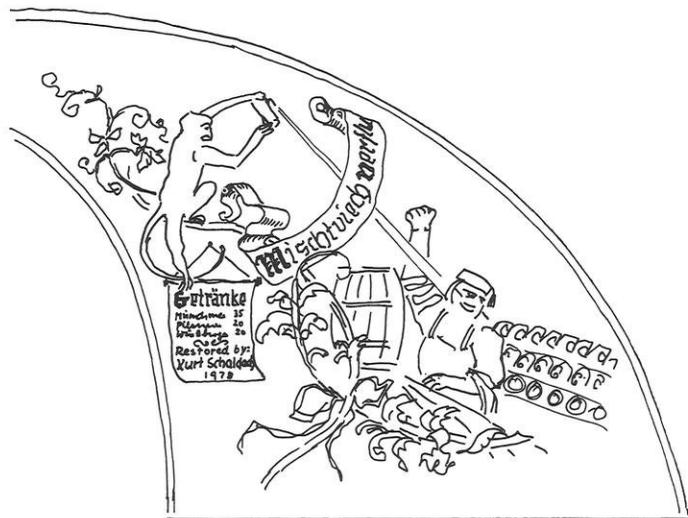
Das Faulthier

„THE SLOTH“
· SYMBOL OF MERRY-MAKING ·

THE MERRY SIDE
OF STUDENT LIFE

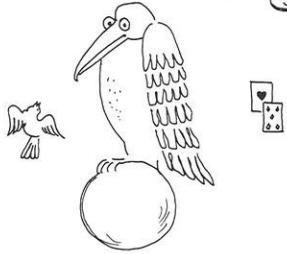


„MENU OF EATS“



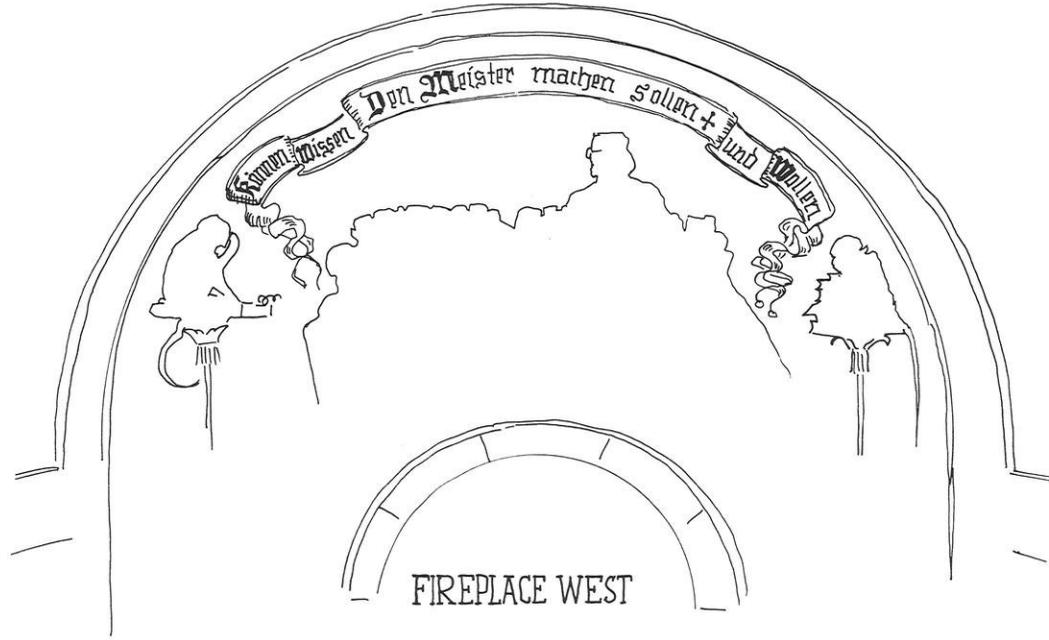
LIST OF DRINKS

Ein weises Haupt



„THE OWL“
• A WISE HEAD •

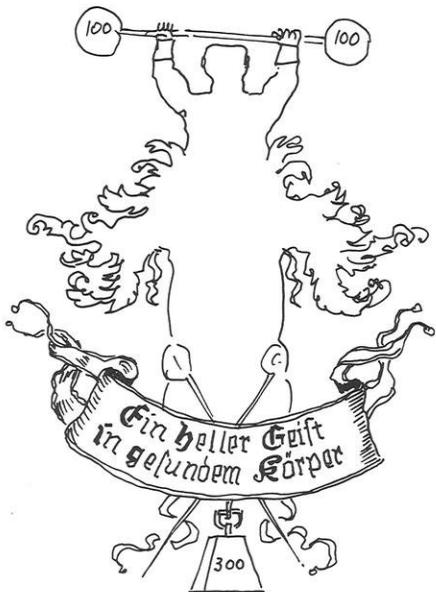
THE SERIOUS SIDE
OF STUDENT LIFE



„TO BE ABLE, TO KNOW, AND TO WILL SHALL
MAKE THE MASTER“

FORENSICS

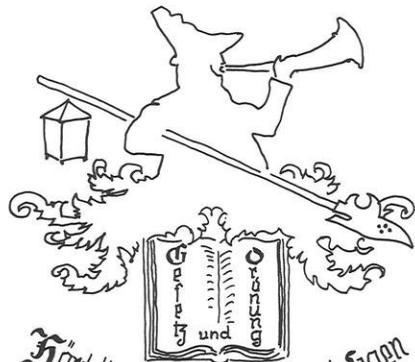
ATHLETICS



„A BRIGHT MIND
IN A HEALTHY BODY“



EIGENBAU * HOME GROWN
„IT LOOSENS THE TONGUE TO MIGHTY
VOLUME“



• LAW AND ORDER •

„HEAR YE, PEOPLE,
AND LET ME ANNOUNCE
THAT THE CLOCK HAS JUST STRUCK
TEN“

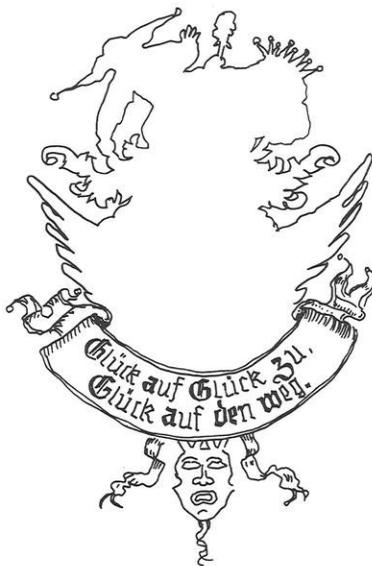
STUDENT GOVERNMENT



„YOUR MIND'S BRILLIANT' SPARKS,
BROADCAST TO THE WORLD”

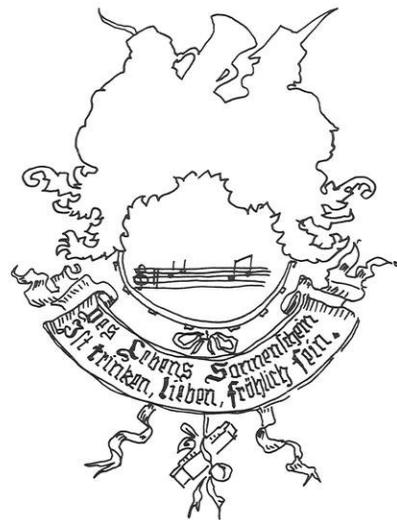
JOURNALISM

DRAMA



„LUCK COMING, LUCK GOING,
LUCK ALL THE WAY”

MUSIC



„LIFE'S SUNSHINE IS TO DRINK,
TO LOVE, AND TO BE MERRY !”

Der Stiftskeller . . . Cellar of the Founders

Originally this room was a billiard room. Then, as enrollments soared and students had difficulty in even finding standing room in the Rathskeller, it was decided, in 1962, to move the billiard tables to the basement of the theater wing and make the area an extension of the Rathskeller--for more seating mid-morning and noon, and for dancing, entertainment, and movies in the evening (thus avoiding the reshuffling of furniture and the disruption of the main Rathskeller area for students not especially interested).

The intention was to carry through the decor and mood of the Rathskeller. The identifying name--Stiftskeller--came handily and appropriately, from St. Peter's Stiftskeller, or cellar of the founders, which Union Director Butts had visited at Salzburg, Austria, years earlier.

THE FIRST ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A stein rail was installed with a wide assortment of German steins bearing the names of the men and women who had "founded" the Wisconsin Union, led its early

development as board members or staff members, or who gave steins of their own simply because they liked this idea; 76 steins in all, with room for more.

An old-time cuckoo clock, hand-carved of wood from the Black Forest, which played the tune from which the "Wisconsin Marching Song" was adapted, and which Butts purchased from a Nuremberg clockmaker in 1932, was moved from the Rathskeller to the new room. So, too, the table top carved with the names of Wisconsin's football greats, which was once the centerpiece of Dad Morgan's malted milk shop and billiard room on State Street, the principal hang-out for men until the Union opened in 1928. The coats of arms of 15 German lands and cities, designed by Elliot Starks, the Union art director, were mounted on a panelled wall.

THE MURALS OF '78

Then the funds ran out. Nothing for mural decoration. Years later as the plans for the Union's Golden Anniversary warmed up, the Class of '52 came to the rescue.

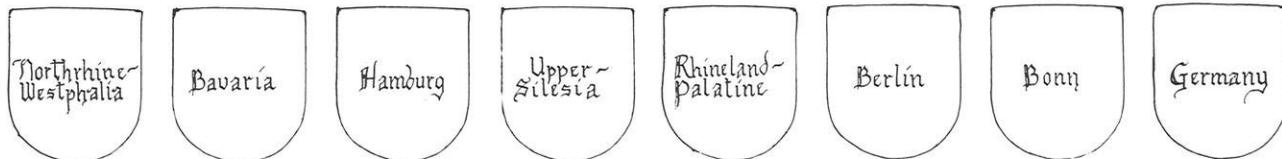
Butts dug out of the archives color photos of the Munich Rathskeller and its accompanying booklet (in German) of the "Jolly Rhymes" inscribed on the walls, which he had collected for possibly just such a purpose when he visited German unions and rathskellers in 1932. And he enlisted Kurt Schaidach, the Milwaukee German painter, who knew rathskellers backwards and forwards, to copy some of them --particularly the battle of the beer steins and wine bottles

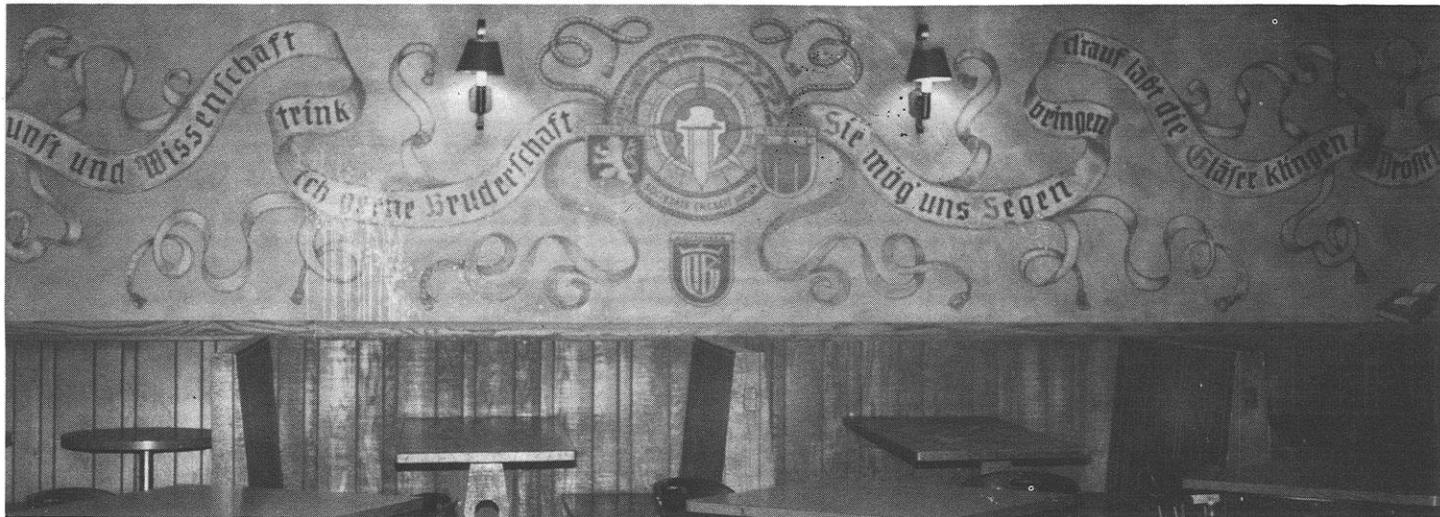
--and to add some of his own. The work was finished in the spring of 1978--a notable companionpiece for the Rathskeller, and far more elaborate.

YOUR ENGLISH GUIDE

Again, the pages which follow tell what the murals show and what the German "Jolly Rhymes" say.

GERMAN COAT-OF-ARM DESIGNS DEPICTING VARIOUS LANDS AND CITIES OF GERMANY





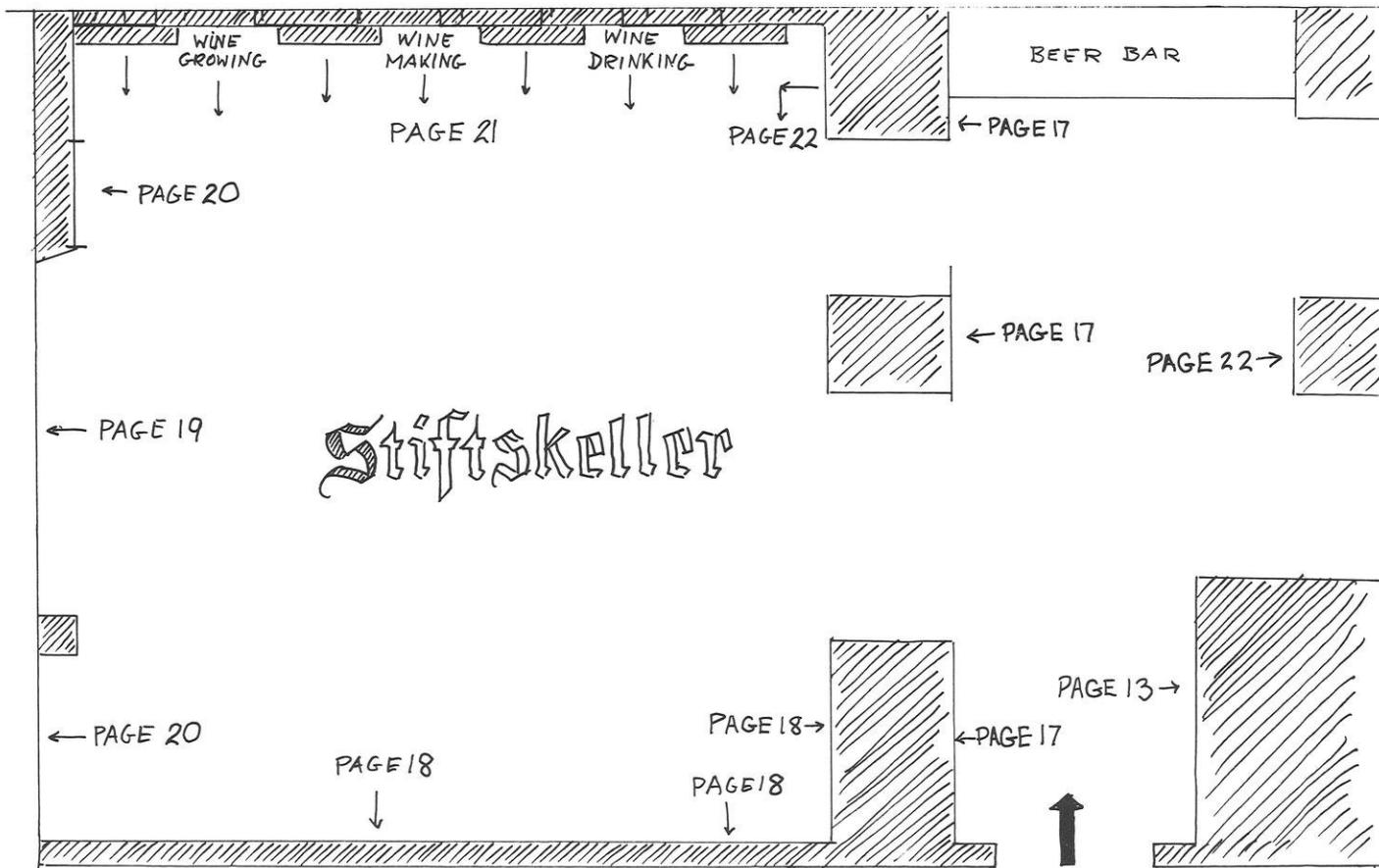
"Art and Science", (south wall) -- with students and teachers reminded by the Union motto, "Societate Crescit Lumen", that "Light (learning) is enhanced by human relationships."

The centerpiece is the Union crest--the Indian pipe of peace (symbol of amity among diverse peoples) superimposed on an arrowhead (symbol of past conflict), which in turn is superimposed on a mariner's compass, signifying that students coming to Wisconsin from the four corners of the earth are united in fellowship at the Union.

Painted in oil on dry plaster (secco) by Kurt Schaldach in 1978.



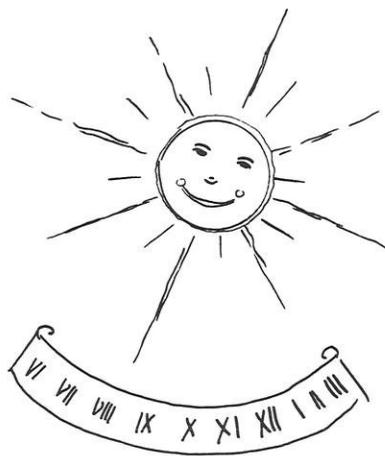
"The Battle of Beer and Wine" (west wall) -- adapted from the famous mural in the Munich Rathskeller. Historic Munich buildings added on the left; Rhine Valley castles on the right. Painted in oil on canvas by Kurt Schaldach in 1978.





Wer nicht liebt
Wein,
Weib,
Gefang,
 bleibt ein
Narr
 sein Leben
 lang.

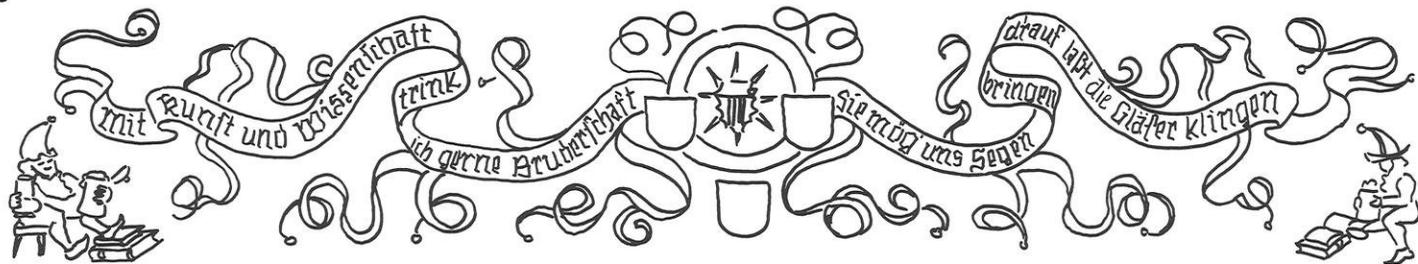
WHO NOT LOVES
 WINE, WOMEN, SONG
 IS A FOOL HIS LIFE LONG.



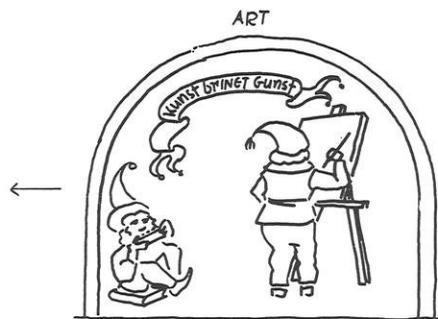
HORAS NON NUMERO
 NISI SERENAS
 COUNT THE SUNNY
 HOURS ONLY.



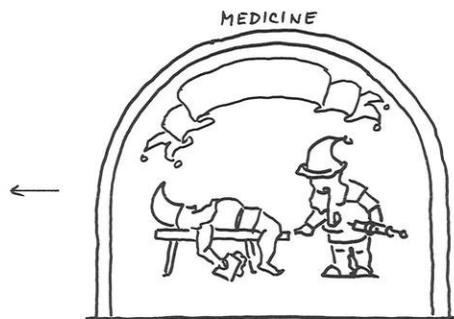
BE HUMOROUS
 THE WORLD IS WITTY.



"WITH ART AND SCIENCE I LIKE TO DRINK BROTHERHOOD. MAY IT BRING US BLESSING - TO THIS LET THE GLASSES RING."



• ART BRINGS HONOUR •

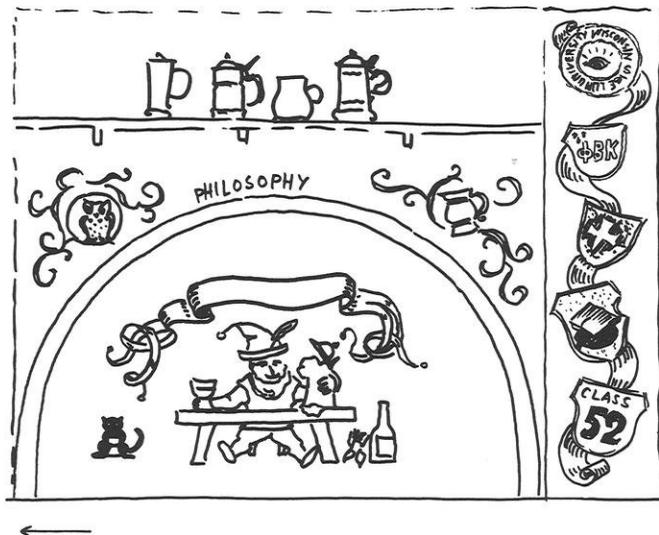


EIN MASZ BIER IST DIE BESTE ARZNEI,
SCHNELL HILFT SIE DIR UND DER SCHMERZ IST AUCH VORBEI !

A STEIN OF BEER IS THE BEST MEDICINE
IT'S A FAST AID AND THE PAIN IS GONE !



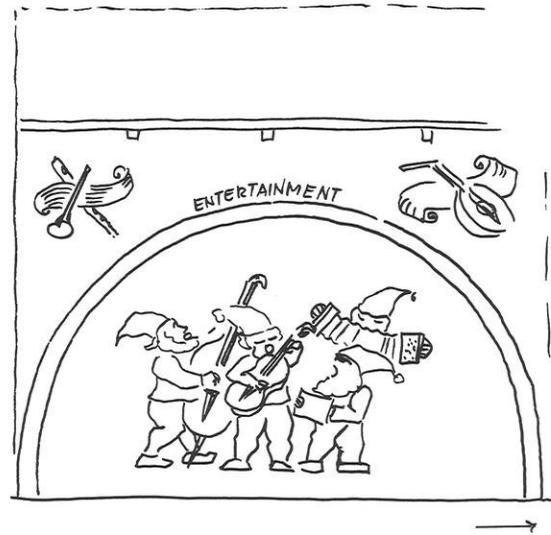
"WHEN WINE AND BIER MAKE WAR ON EACH OTHER
WHO WILL WIN, WHO WILL LOSE?"



BIER AUF WEIN DAS LASS SEIN,
WEIN AUF BIER DAS RAT' ICH DIR.

DON'T DRINK BEER AFTER WINE,
WINE AFTER BEER WON'T HARM YOU.

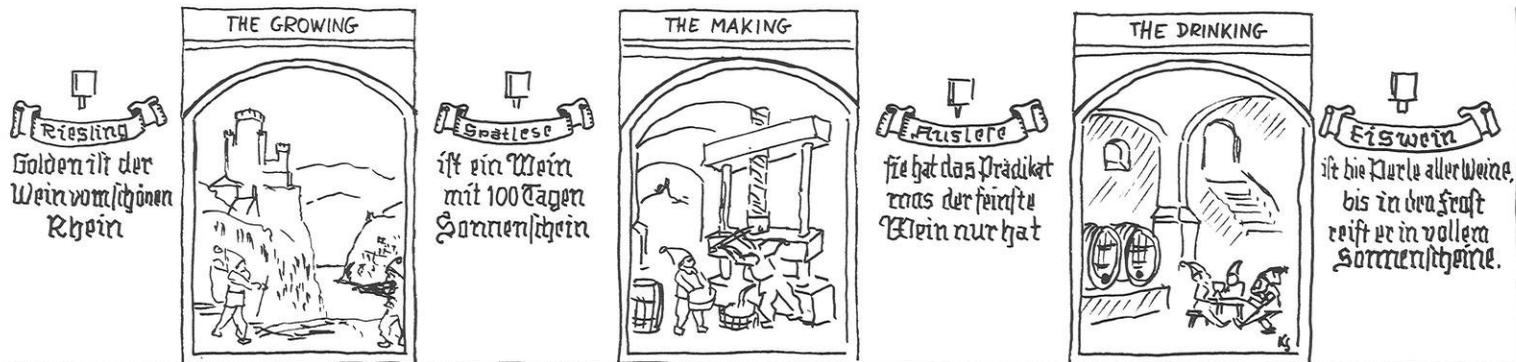
THAT'S AN OLD SAYING!



WO MAN SINGT, DA LASS' DICH RUHIG NIEDER,
BÖSE MENSCHEN HABEN KEINE LIEDER.

REST THOU IN PEACE, MY FRIEND, WHERE SONGS ARE RINGING;
FOR WICKED PEOPLE NEVER THINK OF SINGING.

Füll die Sorgen in ein Gläschen Wein und immer wirst du fröhlich fein!



FILL YOUR WORRIES IN A GLASS OF WINE AND JOYFUL IS YOUR HEART!

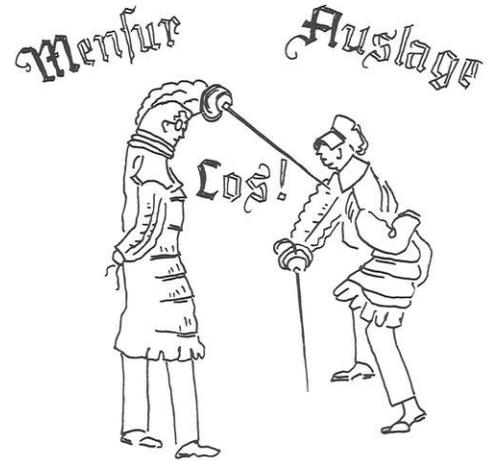
RIESLING
is The golden Wine
from the beautiful
Rhine

SPÄTLESE
is the Wine with
100 days of
Sunshine

AUSLESE
has the prediccate
of the finest wine

EISWEIN
is a premier Wine
'till the frost it
ripens in the
full sunshine

THE STORY OF THE WINEMAKING



MENSUR WAS PRACTISED IN HEIDELBERG
TO RECEIVE SCARS IN THE FACE, AS AN
HONOUR OF THE FRATERNITIES

Introducing Kurt Schaldach

who executed the Stiftskeller murals, restored the Rathskeller decoration.

Kurt was born in Danzig, Germany, in 1913, and attended the School of Arts and Crafts and the Academy of Art there, ignoring his father's warning "not to become a starving artist".

He came to the United States in 1952. "I was painting a mural in Germany," he recalls, "I had to do a picture of a city in Ohio. Cincinnati, I think. I hadn't the slightest idea what it was like. So I came to find out. I fell in love with the country and I stayed." After reading in newspapers about Milwaukee and its 62 German societies, Schaldach made up his mind "to see Germany in America" and made his home base in Milwaukee.

There he worked in oil, acrylic, watercolor, fresco, secco and ink, specializing in Romantic painting, landscape, Gothic lettering, and restoration. He was made a member of the International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works and Fellow of the American Institute for Conservation of Artistic Works. Commissions came thick and fast, from churches, breweries, country clubs, colleges, restaurants, businesses, and private home



owners--in such disparate locations as Milwaukee, California, St. Louis, Chicago, Florida, Davenport, Peoria, Champaign, and Roxbury, Wisconsin.

Among his best-known works: the restoration of the 19th century altarpiece in St. Norbert's Church, Roxbury; the "History of Milwaukee Harbor" in the former Elks Club, Milwaukee, for which the Club received an award from the Milwaukee Historical Society; the 40 x 45 foot exterior wall mural on the Usinger store and factory, Milwaukee, recognized by the City of Milwaukee "for the beautification of Milwaukee".

It took Kurt barely two months to cover, in elaborate detail, all the walls of the Stiftskeller. "I am a little

fast" he says. "It just comes out of the brush." He adds that his photographic memory enables him to store almost every motif he has seen in his "mental computer".

APPRAISALS FROM STUDENTS

And what do students think of his murals, and of him? Schaldach talked to scores of them while he worked, answered their questions, and left a pad on a table where they could write whatever they liked. Here are a few comments, quite typical of many more:

"The murals fit in beautifully. I was delighted with the whole project. It's a pity the artist can't remain on hand permanently."

"Class of '52, I thank you for bringing this wonderful, talented man into our Union. We will always treasure his lovely art work."

"Wow! What a great idea! This

room has a certain atmosphere. Having met the painter, I shall enjoy this 'touch of Germany' at the Union. Thanks for thinking of us."

"My highest commendation to the artist, whose ideas and talents have gone so far in revitalizing the Stiftskeller."

"I spent many hours here when it was dingy but loved. Now it is a real treat to eat my lunch."

"I think it's the greatest thing that's happened to the Stift in a long time."

"It's rare to find someone who still takes a genuine interest in other people and what they do. You are such a person. We are left with a lasting impression of your amazing art and your kindness."

"Your work adds life and character to the Union. You have been made immortal."



CREST OF THE ARTIST-PAINTER

Auf Wiedersehen!