

## SHOOTING CLUBS AROUND DAVENPORT

The Davenport Schuetzengesellschaft was not the only shooting club around Davenport. There was a large amount of activity in Davenport and vicinity. It appears that the most popular form of shooting was with a shotgun.

The following list is divided into five headings of types of clubs. The schuetzen vereins, in the German/Swiss tradition, are my main interest, but other shooting clubs are listed, so that they can be determined to be separate from that tradition. There were also rifle clubs in the American tradition, pistol clubs, and shotgun clubs. There was interplay among the clubs, as someone could be a member of more than one, and since the clubs would compete with each other.

Since most of my readings to date have been in the 1890 to 1920 time period, the following clubs are mostly from that era. Some of these were very active and there is a considerable record of activity. For others, there is only an occasional mention with only hints of their activities. For this article I am only mentioning dates I know: these clubs existed both before and after the dates mentioned. Some of these could have merged into others, or be the same club having changed its name.

Prior to the Civil War there were several “Rifle Companies” formed in Davenport. The function of these seems to have been mainly to march rather than shoot. The Germans and Swiss were different from the “English” (i.e. all non-Germans) in their thought that a “rifle company” or prospective soldier should practice shooting their rifle. References to a “German Rifle company” in Davenport prior to the Civil War may or may not refer to the Davenport Schuetzen Verein. “German Rifle Company” may have been an English language press fitting a German Schuetzen Verein into a form it was familiar with, or it could have been a completely different organization. Among the various military Companies were the Davenport Rifles (formed 3 Feb, 1857), Davenport Guards (March 1858), Davenport Sarsfield Guards (March 1858 an Irish company), and the Davenport City Artillery (9 July 1857).

### *Schuetzen Vereins*

**Davenport Shooting Association (DSA).** Of course, this is us. The name **Davenport Schuetzen Verein** was used by the club prior to incorporation in 1868, possibly as early as the founding of the First Club in 1854. Currently, “Davenport Schuetzen Verein” is used as an alternate name for our organization. From 1868 to 1890 the DSA was incorporated as the **Davenport Schuetzengesellschaft (DSG)** and went by that name until Anti-German sentiment during World War I ended the use of the German language in Iowa. The Club has been incorporated as the Davenport Shooting Association, in English, since 1890.

**Excelsior Rifle Club, Davenport** was closely aligned with the DSA. The Excelsior Rifle Club was a founding member of the Westlichen Schuetzen Bund in 1872. From the founding of the WSB until the merger with the Oberin Mississippi Schuetzen Bezirks (OMSB) a Davenport Shooter could participate as a member in the WSB or other Bunds by membership in the Excelsior Club, and the club would only have to pay dues for the shooters that were interested in the WSB events. After the merger of the WSB and the OMSB to form the Central Sharpshooters Union in 1897, it was no longer necessary, the Excelsior Rifle Club turned to indoor shooting.

It was under the auspices of the Excelsior club that indoor shooting was arranged in Central Turner Hall in Davenport in 1897. The range was first in the bowling alley and was later moved to the tower. The Excelsior Club was formally incorporated for the purpose of running indoor events in January 1897.

After 1897 The Excelsior rifle club had shoots every Thursday after the DSA's Turkey shoot until March, just before the DSA's first match of the outdoor season. The concluding event of the Excelsior Rifle Club's season was a four-day match, covering three evenings and Sunday afternoon. There were awards for the most points in the best 10 ten-shot targets in a season long contest. There was a system of handicapping, as well as scratch scoring. The Excelsior Rifle Club's matches were at a distance of 75 feet. The target used was a ¼ inch ring target with 25 points max.

The last reference I have encountered to the Excelsior Rifle Club was in December 1914, at the start of the 1914-15 season. My readings during what would have been the Excelsior club's season have not been extensive in the 'teens.

The tie between the DSA and the Excelsior Club is emphasized by an article on the annual season ending tournament for the Excelsior Rifle club stating: "The indoor season is now over, and the outdoor shooting will be inaugurated next Sunday at Schuetzenpark with the first of the regular monthly competitions." (FBclipMarch1907)

**Eclipse Rifle Club, Bettendorf** – A competitor of the Excelsior Rifle Club was the Eclipse Rifle Club of Bettendorf. This club competed exclusively at 75 feet using the same target. The season for the Eclipse Rifle Club ended in June with a large meet, and awarding of season prizes. Though a member of the Excelsior club, Chris Jansen shot with the Eclipse Rifle Club on occasion for friendly competition. The Eclipse rifle club had a semi-outdoor range, meaning that the targets were outdoors and the shooting was from inside a building.

It is my impression that the Eclipse rifle club was formed prior to the Excelsior club's move indoors in 1897. I have seen mention of this club as late as November 1911.

**Out Door Rifle Club.** The Outdoor Rifle club used the same 75-foot target as the Excelsior and Eclipse Rifle Clubs, and also had a longer rifle range. The Out Door Rifle Club had schuetzen style events including a King shoot, but possibly also non-schuetzen events. An article mentions them having a King shoot in September 1907 at their range near “Duck Creek”.

**Maysville Schuetzen Verein.** Maysville is referred to in the protocols of the DSG from time to time as early as the 1870’s, normally as a mention of a communication regarding an upcoming event. There is mention of this club as late as 1916, where it is mentioned at the end of an article about a monthly shoot that several members of the DSA may go the Maysville King shoot as Maysville is finally allowing telescopic sights.

The Maysville club had some events that were the same as the DSG, but also some that I do not recognize. At their shoot of October 18, 1907, they had the following events: Verein Target, Stich, Mann, Frie Hand, Cartridge, and Anlage Target. The DSG of the time had an ehrenscheibe, which was the same as the verein target and is now our honor target, Mann, and Stich, and had used a Cartridge Scheibe in the 1890’s. I have no description of the Frie Hand or Anlage Scheibe.

**Wheatland, Clinton County, IA.** This club was a member of the CSSU in the 1910’s and 1920’s and the site of some of the CSSU 100-shot matches. Closely related to the nearby Riverside Gun Club in Toronto, these two clubs cooperated in conducting some of the meets, having some events at one range and other events at the other range. This was certainly a club in the schuetzen tradition, though the events at the monthly shoots were different from the DSG, and similar to Maysville. The Muhl family came from this club and the Toronto club and joined the DSG in the late 1920’s, though maintaining membership in both. This was after the demise of the CSSU permitted a shooter to join a club other than his local verein. The Wheatland Verein was in existence before the 1880’s and well into the 1930’s.

In the early 1890’s Wheatland had regular monthly shoots as well as an annual King shoot and an annual Kinderfest. The events in the 1892-1894 seasons included Verein Scheibe, Mann Scheibe, Anlage scheinbe, Frei hand scheinbe, and a Damen Scheibe. The Damen Scheibe event was for Women. The verein scheinbe was the same as the Ehrenscheinbe of the CSSU or the DSA. The Mann Scheibe was the same as in the CSSU. I do not have descriptions of the other events. Maysville also used the Anlage and Frei hand events.

The Davenport Shooting Association made donations to tournaments run by the Wheatland club in the late 1930’s. There is mention of the contributions, but no mention of the results of the meets in the minutes of the monthly meetings of the DSA. In the minutes of the DSG is mention of an excursion to Wheatland on September 23, 1883, probably to an event of this club. (B323)

**Riverside Gun Club: Toronto, Clinton County, IA.** The Riverside Gun club had a 75-foot “semi-outdoor” range. I take this to mean that the firing line was indoors and the targets were outdoors. On January 2, 1940 the membership of the Davenport Shooting Association approved a donation of \$50 to the Riverside club towards two shoots to be held in the following summer months. (D450)

**Lost Nation, Clinton County, IA.** The Lost Nation Verein was mentioned in a financial report of the OMSB tournament in 1890 in Davenport as having contributed, and was the site where Ed Muhl produced an amazing target at 75 feet in 1933. I have no other information.

**Lyons Schuetzen Verein Clinton County, IA.** This club was very close in style to the Davenport Schuetzengeellschaft, The DSG and the Lyons Verein had a close relationship. There are frequent mentions of members of the two clubs attending each other’s meets and tournaments and setting up practice meets together. The Lyons Club shot outdoors at 200 yards. The events mentioned for the Lyons club are the same as were used by Davenport.

This relationship was probably due to the ready accessibility of Lyons from Davenport, especially after the interurban connected Clinton and Davenport, but dates to well before the interurban. Regular steamboat service was available between the two cities. After the interurban was built, it was a 1 hr 45 minute train ride from Davenport to Clinton.

Lyons was just north of Clinton, and was annexed into Clinton in 1895, though the schuetzenverein continued under the name of Lyons.

Four members of the Lyons Schuetzenverein joined the DSA in 1907, even though that was against the rules of the CSSU: both vereins were members of the CSSU. Those four had frequently attended shoots of the DSG for several years. They later shot in CSSU events as members of the Lyons team, but shot in Davenport events as members of the DSA. One of those four, JB Hayungs, was DSA’s King in 1921. In 1905, when Chris Jansen and Emil Berg were preparing for the 100 shot match in Milwaukee, they arranged a practice team shoot at the Lyons range with teams of three, each team member shooting 50 shots.

The Lyons Schuetzenverein was one of the founding vereins of the OMSB in 1870. This club was also part of the until 1921. I have the results of a monthly shoot of the Lyons club in 1929 in which shooters from Davenport and Wheatland participated.

**Plain View Shooting Society.** The only mention of this that I have found is that they held their annual “Ox Shoot” On October 6, 1907. (DDL10/6/1907)

**Rock Island Schuetzen Verein.** The only mention of this club that I have is in an article in the Illinois State Historical Journal. I have found some references in some articles on the Davenport King shoot about shooters from Rock Island, but none that specifically mention a Rock Island Verein. I am skeptical that such an organization existed.

The **Eldridge Turner Society** had an annual Schuetzenfest in 1907. It's only speculation based on almost no information, but there may have been a "Schuetzen Section" of this Turner society.

### *Rifle Clubs*

**Marlin Rifle Club, Rock Island.** From an article on the 1905 DSA king shoot: "The officers were disappointed in the absence of the Marlin rifle club of Rock Island, which had been expected for the king shoot."(FBclip) The Marlin Rifle Club had a range at Black Hawks Watch Tower in Rock Island. I have no indication of whether the club was schuetzen or American style. This could easily be a reporter's inaccuracy, misreporting the name "Milan," but since I have two mentions of "Marlin" several months apart, I consider this unlikely.

**Davenport Rifle Club** had a range northeast of Bettendorf on the farm of AJ Freund. The range had target pits at distances of 200, 300, 500 and 600 yards. The range was "army style" and was dedicated on July 2, 1916. At the dedication shoot were teams from the army, Davenport Rifle Club, Gordon Van-Tyne, and the Elks.

**Davenport High School.** In 1920 there was a controversy over whether Davenport High School should hire a coach for their rifle team. There had been a rifle team for several years at that time. The rifle team continued and eventually had a coach, but I don't know the resolution of the controversy in 1920. The Davenport High school range was a 50-foot range and was in the basement of Marshall Gymnasium, under the stage.

### *Pistol Clubs*

**Davenport Revolver Club** constructed a pistol range at Schuetzenpark in 1917.

**Vigilantes.** In the 1910's and 1920's, before the Iowa Highway Patrol was formed, the vigilantes was an organized Sheriff's auxiliary sponsored by the Iowa Banker's Association. If there was a robbery in town, the Sheriff could call his vigilantes in the surrounding towns to set up roadblocks and prevent the escape of the miscreants. The Iowa Bankers Association sponsored an annual pistol competition for the vigilantes, starting at the county level, with the best shots going on the state competition at Camp Dodge in Des Moines.

## *Shotgun Clubs*

**Cumberland Gun Club, Davenport.** This club had a shotgun range at Suburban Park (now Credit Island). They had a season of six months, awarding a silver cup to their season's champion. They would set up occasional team matches after which they would adjourn to the Inn of Suburban Park where the losers would treat the winners to a meal. The Cumberland Gun Club had at least two annual events that were major regional events, one in April and one in September, though they also had annual New Year's Day Tournament. I have seen mention of the club as early as 1905 and as late as 1915.

**Amateur Gun Club, Davenport.** A shotgun club that had six monthly meets each summer with a gold medal awarded to their champion at the end of the season. They had their own range, location not known. My reference was in 1905.

**Forester Gun Club, Davenport.** Mentioned on October 1, 1895. In January 4, 1898 was an election of officers. One of the things the club was going to look into in 1898 was the introduction of Chinese Pheasants into the County.

**Rock Island Gun Club.** A Shotgun Club, range at Black Hawk's Watch Tower. The DSA owns the Rock Island Gun Club championship medal that was won by O. B. Schmidt, who was DSA's Treasurer.

**West End Gun Club, Davenport.** An article in the Davenport Republican reports on the election of Officers January 3, 1897. Earlier mentioned November 5, 1895.

**Quad City Gun Club.** The only mention I have of this club is in July 1920 when they postponed a match to participate in a match in Muscatine.

## *General*

**Company B** This was the National Guard Company in Davenport. Although not a rifle club, there are numerous articles in the paper in the 1890's to World War I of Company B competing with other National Guard companies in rifle matches.