



## **A telephone in 1878!**

An entry in the minutes of the Davenport Schuetzengesellschaft on April 8, 1878 says very clearly "telephone." When you see a word in English in the German script, it stands out. Examining the German text more closely, the club had agreed to buy a telephone.

This seemed a bit early to me, so I looked up the invention of the telephone. Bell filed his first patent on the telephone in January 1876, his second in 1877. According to the web site "inventors.about.com" there were 47,900 telephones in the United States by 1880. Early telephones were leased in pairs with the buyer stringing the wires. Apparently one or more likely two of these telephones were at Schuetzen Park.

It seems logical to have used the phones between the shooting house and the target house, knowing how dependent we are on the phone system today, but I am still trying to make out the German handwriting. Other entries indicate that the club installed telephone or telegraph poles, which involved some controversy with the contractor: the poles were discussed at several monthly meetings. In 1892 the club spent \$147 for a contractor to apply shellac to the wires. Early electrical wires had paper insulation and needed a coating to protect the insulation from water.

The method of transmitting scores was the same then as now, with 5, 10, 15, or 20 indicated by a paddle in the corners of the target and a "punch" (their word) for each additional ring.