



Calumet County Historical Society Museum

**Open Sundays June-September 1:00 to 4:00
or by appointment**

Chilton Schuetzenverein By Chris Pederson

Chris Pederson is a Military Historian for the United States Army and the secretary of the Eau Claire Schuetzenverein. His master's thesis is on the Schuetzen groups of Wisconsin and was asked to share some of his findings on Chilton with us.

A Schuetzenverein is a Germanic shooting society with traditions that go back to medieval times. Annual shooting competitions crowned the winner "Schützenkönig" or king of the Schuetzen (marksmen) for that year. Traditional costumes and events have endured to the modern day where in the nation of Germany, a million and half citizens are members of Schuetzen clubs. The biggest schuetzenfest (marksmen's festival) is held in Hannover every year where thousands of members of Schuetzen clubs march in their organization's uniform, opening the festivities. Any self-respecting community in Germanic lands has their own schuetzenverein and annual schuetzenfest of various sizes.

With the great numbers of Germans settling the Fox Valley and surrounding areas, many decided to recreate these societies in their adopted homeland. One of these largely German communities that did so, was Chilton, Wisconsin.

Often it was local leaders who were also leaders of the local schuetzenverein. This was true in Chilton with Henry Rollmann. Before he retired, Rollmann had been a Chilton Alderman, Mayor and State Senator. He was also a great marksman and secretary of the Chilton Schuetzenverein. The secretary is often the person who is responsible for the majority of accomplishments of an organization and this was true of Henry Rollmann.

I mentioned Henry Rollmann was a great shot. The year the Chilton Schuetzenverein built their Schuetzenhaus (the main clubhouse and shooting house of a schuetzenverein) in 1885, Rollmann took second in a schuetzenfest consisting of marksmen from Green Bay, Oshkosh, New Holstein, Appleton and other places in Northeast Wisconsin.¹ So where was this schuetzenhaus? It can be found today on the Calumet County Fairgrounds as the current *Fair Office*.

In its time the schuetzenhaus hosted state schuetzenfests with the best and most well-known Schuetzen marksmen of the State and many from neighboring states. At the first schuetzenfest of the Wisconsin Sharpshooters Association marksmen from La Crosse, Milwaukee, Sheboygan, Oshkosh, Wausau, Monticello, New Glarus, Colby, New Holstein and possibly other places competed at the Chilton



Do you have a old photo of Chilton's Schuetzenverein? Email us we'd love to see it! Info@CalumetCountyHistoricalSociety.org

Schuetzenhaus. Of the many competitors, Henry Rollmann is listed as coming in at 1st place on the "Union Target – For the state of Wisconsin." ²

There were also team shoots at the 1900 state event and on Chilton Team "B" was another prominent charter member, George Steudel from Bavaria.³ He was a prominent and diverse local businessman, charter member of the Turnverein, and patent owner of a type of plow. ⁴ In his obituary it said, "Ever since



Believed to be the Wisconsin Sharpshooters Union event at New Glarus in 1908 which Chilton attended

coming to Chilton Mr. Steudel has been a prominent factor in the advancement of the town. He was a shrewd business man and successful to a remarkable degree in all his undertakings."⁵ His son, Theodore Stuedel was a local jeweler and prominent member of the schuetzenverein as well. The Jeweler members for Schuetzen clubs often made medals for tournaments, so there may be one of his medals hiding in an attic somewhere in the region today.

At these schuetzenfests in Chilton the marksmen would shoot out of one of the eight shooting ports of the schuetzenhaus. Today these shooting ports can be clearly seen, though they are nailed shut and some have been cut into to add a door or something similar. After (and perhaps during) the shooting, the beer would flow freely at the schuetzenhuas. Friendly conversations in German and English and cornet bands could be heard along with the smell of cigars at these traditional festivals where people could recreate some of the traditions of the Germanic homelands they left behind.

The many factors working against German traditions like prohibitionists, nativism and anti-German sentiment from World War One as well as the natural process of assimilation in the United States, all caused these groups to go into rapid decline, especially after 1917. In 1926 the Chilton Schuetzenverein disbanded and sold their Schuetzen Park and Schuetzenhaus to the Agricultural Association. Henry Rollmann would become a Treasurer of the County Fair after this as well. Though there were in the neighborhood of three dozen or more schuetzenhauses in Wisconsin at the time, today Chilton has one of the few still known to exist.

TO STATE SCHUETZENFEST

Local Sharpshooters Will Hold a Meeting Tonight to Arrange Representation to Meet.

The sharpshooters' society will hold a meeting this evening to arrange to send down representation to the biennial tournament of the state union of sharpshooters' societies in New Glarus, Wis., beginning Thursday and lasting for three days.

Those who have signified their intention of going are Otto Mueller, Gustave Naffz, Otto Mathie, Hilmer Schmidt and P. Weinkauf. Otto Mueller is an exchampion sharpshooter of the state. He lost his title two years ago, a La Crosse man winning it by the narrow margin of two points.

The state society is composed of teams located at Wausau, Milwaukee, New Glarus, Chilton, Monticello, and few other places.

The state officers are: President, M. Schmid; vice president, Dr. Henry Hoesly; first shooting master, Albert Schlatter; second shooting master, Henry Aebly.

1. Green Bay Press-Gazette, 07 Sep 1885, Mon, Page 3
2. Chilton Times, July 21, 1900 page 1.
3. Chilton Times, July 21, 1900 page 1.

4. The Eau Claire News, 22 Mar 1884, Sat, Page 1
5. Chilton Times, December 25, 1915.
Newspaper Clipping: Wausau Daily Herald, 07 Jul 1908