

# Davenport's Schützenpark: As described in the German Press in 1885

In the charming area of Blackhawk also lies the magnificent Shooting Park (Schützen Park) with its spacious shooting gallery and twenty gun stands, which are completely canopied. At the beginning of the shooting, the large doors, running on rollers, are pushed aside, whereupon the target standing behind them then becomes visible. It is a double target that is not rotated, as I saw in Germany, but rather is pulled up or down, so that as soon as a shot has been fired, the respective target counter marks the impact of the bullet and the shot number, the target disappears and the lower one takes its place. The recorder, after noting each shot, gives a signal by means of a bell attached to a wire. This is exactly the same device that we had in 1881 in Husum as the rotating shooting tournament. Shooting is done facing north, which, as all marksmen know, provides the best lighting for the targets.

Besides the shooting gallery there are, of course, several other large structures: in the main building is the residence of the manager and the restaurant, as well as a spacious dance hall. In addition, there are two large covered dance floors outside, four skittle alleys, gun stands for air-guns etc. In one part of the Park, enclosed by wire fencing, tame deer graze peacefully; it is truly a charming picture. In the summertime, concerts take place here often, and the children's bird shoot is held here. You cannot feel better anywhere than you do in the fresh, woods-scented and shady lap of (Mother) Nature, with the jolly crack of rifles, the deep rumble of bowling balls, the endearing charm of the mighty German men's chorus, the intoxicating sounds of superb German music added to which is the happy sound of our dear mother tongue falling on our ear almost everywhere. You believe that you have been transported back to the dear, old German motherland, and forget entirely that you are separated from it by a trivial five thousand miles.

On beautiful Sunday afternoons numerous crowds of people stream here, sometimes you meet four or five thousand, and sometimes, when something

special is scheduled, this number is doubled. So it was last summer on a Sunday afternoon, when a good ten thousand people attended the "Upper Mississippi Shooting Association's" regional meet (Rotating Shooting Tournament). I want to note also that you can go by horse-drawn streetcar to the edge of the city, and from there a broad, easy foot path leads through shady woods, uphill and downhill to the beautiful Park, but you can also go by wagon all the way uphill. This place that I have just described is the property of the Davenport Shooting Association (Davenport Schützenverein).

Written by Theodor Jansen in 1885 from Davenport back to his home city in Schleswig-Holstein, Husum. It appeared in the Husumer Wochenblatt. Jansen was an associate editor for the Iowa Reform for about five years. One of his sons, Christian Jansen, a well known jeweler, was also a leading member of the Davenport Schützenverein.

## Deer Like Trees!



Drew and Becky Lensch prepare a "deer cage" to protect the Bald Cypress they just planted near the newly restored "Deer Pond" at Schützenpark. American Sycamore, River Birch, Weeping Willow and Cottonwood were also planted.

# German Traditions

## The Bird Shoot & Volksmarsch

The bird shoot, or “Vogelschießen”, is a tradition that dates back the the middle ages. A large wooden, and very exaggerated model of a bird, almost always an eagle, is placed atop a tall pole. The parts of the bird, head, wings, tail, claws, breast, rump etc., are loosely fit together with dowels. Contestants take turns trying to shot the parts of the bird from its body in a sequence until only the breast portion is left. The person who shoots the final part from the pole is named the King, or Queen. This activity was done for decades at the Schützenpark and at our local Turner Halls. To the best of our knowledge, the bird shoot at the “Oktoberfest Sunday” on Sept. 28th at Schützenpark will be the first bird shoot in Davenport in many decades. Contestant shooting-off a piece of the bird will be awarded a special pin from Germany, as will the King or Queen. “No live birds will be harmed in this event.” A crossbow with safety enhanced arrows/bolts will be used In some instances, a small caliber rifle is still used in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Liechtenstein. There is a a small participation cost. *Hayman's Ace Hardware* is the sponsor of this event.

The Volksmarsch, or “people’s walk”, has been a popular healthy pastime of Germans for many decades. In our area, The Mississippi River Ramblers, established in 1987, are the organizers of this noncompetitive sport. On Sept. 28, participants of the “Oktoberfest Sunday” Volksmarsch will begin their 5K or 10k walk from 8:00a.m. - 1:00p.m. at the festival grounds of the Schützenpark and walk through the Park’s woods to Telegraph Road. Walkers will be among the first to see the recently restored “Deer Pond” at Schützenpark. Once on Telegraph Rd, you will travel west to the newest of Davenport’s city parks, Sunderbruch Park. Once there, you can walk the many nice wooded trails before turning back towards Schützenpark. Once back at Schützenpark, walkers can enjoy the live music, great food and other activities going on that day. Toilets will be available at both parks. Walkers may park in the parking lot of the Good Samaritan Home, 700 Waverly Road. For more information about the Volksmarsch, call Margy Nash (563) 324-2525. There is a small participation cost.

