

## **SHOOTING RANGES**

Many of our members have not been members long enough to know what to some of us is the very recent past. This article is an introduction and overview of the shooting facilities used by the Davenport Shooting Association. There are a number of topics touched on by this article that I plan to cover in more extensive articles later.

Several of these ranges are within the memory of our long-time members. Hopefully some of them will add some descriptions of these facilities and events that happened there, or tell me of any errors.

## **OUT DOOR RANGES**

### **Before Schuetzenpark**

A history of the club signed by Wilckens and E. Berg, says that "Rifle practice was held on the Dubuque road, south of Duck Creek, near Leonard's brick yard, and also on Telegraph road at the rear of Koenig's Villa usually in connection with family festivities." Owing to the possibility of punctuation errors, this could be read as from two to four sites.

Target shooting was introduced in 1864. The same article says that "Having tried various shooting grounds, the society rented a range for four years in order to provide more permanent facilities, this being located on Judge John F. Dillon's property in Northwest Davenport." The same article says "Regular monthly target practice was held ... in a grove in Northwest Davenport, near 14<sup>th</sup> and Division streets." It is unclear whether these were two sites or the same site.

### **Schuetzenpark; 1870-1937.**

Schuetzenpark was located on Waverly Road west of the City of Davenport. Good Samaritan Nursing Home is now at the site. Jens Lorenzen, a prominent Davenport businessman and enthusiastic shooter, purchased the land for the construction of a range at a cost of \$1,500. When the club was able to take over the property at cost the range was built. A bowling alley, dance hall, and dining hall were included in the facilities when the park was dedicated June 12, 1870. The first shoot at Schuetzenpark was June 26, 1870 with \$100 in prizes. From the beginning, Schuetzenpark was a center for community activities. Weekly Band concerts were held there in summers from around 1870 until into the 1900's.

At the Schuetzenpark range, shooting was to the north along the west edge of the property. Originally a 10-target range was built at a distance of 170 yards. In May 1892 a new target house was built to extend the range to 200

yards and 10 targets. Space was reserved to expand the range another 18 firing points, if needed in the future. This project included the purchase of an adjacent two acres in a north-south strip for the room to make the additions. Eventually the range was expanded to 20 targets.

Due to prohibition, the park was no longer able to sustain itself financially and was a drain on the Association's finances. The DSG agreed to sell the property to the Chiropractic Psychopathic Sanitarium in May 1923. After the sale, the facilities were converted by the Sanitarium to its use. In the agreement to sell the property, the use of the range by the Association was to continue until the contract for sale was paid off.

The range shot into a cordwood backstop so the velocity of the bullets was limited to 1,000 fps, and jacketed bullets could not be used. The backstop also had to be rebuilt periodically, by restacking the cordwood.

### **Jersey Ridge Road; 1938-1994.**

This range was constructed in 1937, and the range was completed in August of 1937. There is an expense noted in the minutes for the move from Schuetzenpark to the Jersey Ridge Range that indicates that the move took place on August 9, 1937. The low bidder for the construction contract was Rudolf Schindler at a cost of \$2,373. Construction was necessitated by the completion of the sale of Schuetzenpark. According to a resolution passed by the membership the range was to have a distance of 205 yards from the shooting house to the target line. (D435) The range was constructed to shoot to the east, away from Jersey Ridge Road. There were ten targets at this range.

As originally purchased, the property included 35.35 acres. In 1948 the area east of the target house was sold, leaving 14.19 acres. An easement for bullet impact was retained as part of the sale.

In 1943 outdoor shooting was suspended and the entire shooting program was conducted indoors at the Davenport police range, so the outdoor range sat idle. This was to save resources for the war effort. At least two offers were made for the range property in the early 1960's, but they were rejected. The property was rented for pasture during this time.

The outdoor program was resumed in 1965 with a five-month outdoor season May to September. The outdoor season was extended to six months in 1973.

### **Princeton; 1995 –current**

## **INDOOR RANGES**

### **Central Turner Hall; 1897-1912?**

Turner Hall was never the official site of a Davenport Schuetzengesellschaft range, however it was where the offices of the DSG were located. It was also where the closely allied Excelsior Rifle Club had its offices. In 1897 Emil Berg made arrangements in Turner Hall for a range for use by the Excelsior Rifle Club. The Excelsior Rifle Club used that range at least through the winter of 1912.

The range was constructed in the bowling alley, shooting over the lanes. Shooting was at a distance of 75 feet.

### **Davenport (now Central) High School 1930-1943.**

Shooting was conducted at this range from when the indoor shooting program was started in 1930. This range was located under the stage at the south end of Marshall Gymnasium. In those days, the high school had Junior ROTC and a rifle team. There was a swimming pool at this location when I was in high school there, but that's been more than a few years, so I can't say what is there now. Shooting was at a distance of 50 feet.

### **Davenport Police Range 1943-to May 1961.**

This range was located across Harrison Street from Davenport City Hall in the basement of the Davenport Police Station. In 1943 all shooting was moved indoors to the police range. Moving the shoots indoors to a more central location would save gasoline. Changing to 22 caliber rifles exclusively and recovering the lead would save metal for the war effort. Soon after moving in, the DSG purchased and installed target carriers.

The Davenport Police Station burned in May 1961. The May 1961 shoot was cancelled and made up at the end of the summer season. Shooting was moved to the Range at the Rock Island Arsenal the month after the fire.

During the summer of 1961 and winter of 1962, the trustees investigated building an indoor range attached to the shooting house at the outdoor range. However, the Arsenal range was available so the club decided not to build its own indoor facility.

### **Rock Island Arsenal June 1961-c1994**

This range was located in the basement of the cafeteria building, someone else will have to supply the name, at the Rock Island Arsenal. Shooting was at a distance of 50 feet. The range initially was a six-firing point range,

though later the size was increased first to 10 then to 20 points. There were two separate sections, each with 10 firing points.

Eventually due to fears of lead levels, and an increasingly uncooperative command of the Arsenal, the range was closed and a new location had to be sought.

**Milan Gun Club yr. c1994-Current**