

Schuetzen Fest 1911 - Part 1

When I saw an article in The Monroe Times earlier this year about the Green County Schuetzen holding the third annual Schuetzen fest on July 31 near Attica, it reminded me that I had recently come across a similar event held in Green County in 1911. The Swiss Rifle Club announced on January 19 that they planned to hold the biennial tournament of the Central Sharpshooters here from July 12 to 16. All of the sharpshooters' societies between the two mountain ranges could participate. They expected between 225 and 250 shooters to attend.

This was a large undertaking for the local society, organized here in 1908, and they would need considerable help from the community. A finance committee, consisting of Henry Hoehn, George Schneider, Henry Hefty, Adam Blumer, Jr., Jacob C. Blumer, and E. T. Kundert, were to begin canvassing for funds the next day.

The next information published was on March 7, when they announced that there would be 18 societies involved. Those in Wisconsin were from Chilton, LaCrosse, Monroe, Monticello, Milwaukee, and New Glarus. Others would come from Chicago; Cincinnati, Iowa; Davenport, Iowa; Denver, Colorado; Highland, Illinois; Kansas City, Missouri; Ouray, Colorado; Peru, Illinois; and St. Louis, Missouri. At this time they were planning to give away from \$3,800 to \$4,200 in prizes. The Club knew that they were "in need of the assistance of every citizen of Monroe."

In a special agreement with the management of the [old] Turner Hall, the Club secured the Berchtesgadener Peasant Players for a return concert on Thursday, March 9, which was to be a benefit for the fest. This would also serve as the farewell concert for the players before their return to Oberammergau, Germany. The editor commented that, "Each number in itself is alone worth the price of admission."



This photo of the Swiss Rifle Club building was copied from a postcard that might have been made as a souvenir for the event when Monroe hosted the Central Sharpshooters for a shoot here in July 1911. This shows the front of the building with the 25 targets in the distance on the left center of the photo. The club owned this property on the east side of what is now Monroe.

An appeal from the committee to the businessmen and citizens of the city on April 27 stated that since the Swiss Rifle Club was "in its embryo state" and was weak, both numerically and financially, they needed the help of all "men who have the honor and welfare of our city at heart" to come to the aid of the Club by work and by money. They asked that the people "assist us to make this festival and tournament a worthy successor to those that have gone before." Remember that the first Cheese Day would not be for another three years. "We can do it, our city has the money." They predicted that hundreds of progressive businessmen would come and see "what we are and what we have and will carry their reports home to their fellow townsmen, more authentic and credible than any glowing description in all the newspapers." The plea was much longer than I have included here.

A large number of enthusiastic citizens met with the executive committee of the tournament at Turner Hall the evening of May 4. Thomas Luchsinger, president of the fest, asked that they make this a festival of the city of Monroe rather than a festival of the schuetzen verein. He expected to make it something for Monroe to be proud of. Henry Hoehn, who was president of the Central league at the time, explained that there was probability of men coming here who were of national renown. Two or more members from each ward were appointed to solicit funds for a financial foundation. Each of these men then had the power to choose their own assistants - if any were needed. E. T. Kundert would call the next meeting.

Less than a week later, the group had received notice of many who were intending to come for the event and asking for reservations. It was already expected at this time that this gathering would be the largest of its kind to be held by the Central Bund in many years. It was suggested that "Monroe and the surrounding country will in many ways derive valuable benefit through the many strangers attracted and every one interested in the welfare of our prosperous city and community should come forward in assisting the soliciting committee liberally in order to make the royal entertainment of these many strangers possible."

The members of the finance committee were to start soliciting funds the following day. The Swiss Rifle Club wanted everyone to understand that money that had been collected so far would "not be used for a selfish purpose and none of it would be carried away by the Shooters in attendance. The club was under heavy expense in having to erect fifteen additional targets, making twenty-five in all; also an equal extension to the shooting house, about 35 feet." There were also additional expenses in advertising, printing, and proper entertainment for the visitors. The committee had already decided to hire suitable music on the square for three or four of the evenings.

I saw nothing in the papers again until July 3, a little more than a week before the event. The committee on decorations asked that citizens, especially merchants, prepare for decorating at the time. "Visitors will come to the city from all parts of the country and the city should be made to look as beautiful and attractive as possible."

The newspaper reported on July 8 that they were expecting several hundred members to arrive in a few days. The first decorations were already in evidence, although there was no indication of what they were. The first visitors to arrive were to be a group of 20 from Highland Park, Illinois. They, along with their wives, were to pass through on Monday evening in a coach on their way to a shoot in New Glarus on Tuesday and return to Monroe on Wednesday. A delegation of 60 from St. Louis was also expected.

The conclusion of this article will be published next Saturday.