

Herman Schuettler was born in 1861 on the old German Nord Seit, known today as Chicago's high rent and hip "Old Town" Lincoln Park neighborhood, at Cleveland and Blackhawk streets. In fact, Schuettler grew up right down the street from St.

Michaels's parish, once the mother church of Chicago's North side German Catholics who laid its cornerstone in 1852 and which survived the great Chicago Fire of 1871. Coming onto the Chicago Police Department in 1882, Schuettler initially was assigned patrol duty in the area (018 District CPD) which encompassed his own neighborhood, but in a few short years his rise through the ranks of the CPD could be considered nothing less than meteoric. By 1888 he was already working in an elite anti anarchist squad led by Captain Michael Schaack. In this same year he not only made sergeant but lieutenant as well and by 1890 captain. Not bad for an 8 year police officer, and it's easy to make the argument that he apparently was "well juiced," but in *History of the Chicago Police* by John Joseph Flinn and John Elbert Wilkie which was published in 1887, Schuettler received this write up:

Hermann Schuettler is one of the young men of the detective force, having been born in Chicago in 1861. In addition to being about the youngest man on the force, he is the tallest. He was appointed to the force June 8, 1883, and was only kept in uniform a short time. So clever an officer was more valuable in citizen's clothes. In connection with Detective Officer Stift, Officer Schuettler worked up the case of Lorenz Krug, who was charged with poisoning Lucy

Heidelmeyer, and Krug was convicted. It was the first conviction in a poisoning case ever secured in Cook County. Klein and Tiedeman, the highwaymen, were brought up with a sharp turn by this young officer, and treated to eight years each in the penitentiary. William Heller, an expert burglar,

who had gone through most of the fine residences in Lake View, was run down, and sent to Joliet for three years. Over fifty cases were developed against him after

he had gone down, and when he was released, in the summer of 1887, he was rearrested and given twenty years. Officer Schuettler was a valuable aid to Captain Schaack in the working up of the Kledzic murder mystery, for which Minkowsky was arrested and hanged. But his widest reputation was gained during the anarchist troubles. He it was who tracked Lingg, the

bomb-maker, to his hiding place on the South Side, and there bearded him in his den. Lingg made a desperate resistance, trying his utmost to kill the officer with a knife or revolver; but Schuettler, being young and strong as an ox, overpowered him by main strength, and made him a prisoner.

As noted by Flinn and Wilkie, Schuettler was an imposing, massive man, some put his height and weight at 6'6" and 300 pounds with enormous strength that made him physically intimidating to anyone crossing his path, whether criminals, fellow police officers or newspaper reporters. One such reporter, Ben Hecht, was to become much more renown as hollywood's premier scriptwriter in later decades. Hecht reflected on his early years with the *Chicago Daily News* at this time:

"I haunted streets, whorehouses, police stations, courtrooms, theater stages, jails, saloons, slums, madhouses, fires, murders, riots, banquet halls and bookshops. I ran everywhere in the city like a fly buzzing in the works of a clock, tasted more than any fit belly could hold, learned not to sleep, and buried myself in a tick-tock of whirling

hours that still echo in me.

(Eszterhas, Joe. *The Devil's Guide to Hollywood: The Screenwriter as God*, Macmillan (2006).

Hermann Schuettler, Chicago's "Greatest Policeman!"



East Chicago Avenue Police District (known to many of our members as 018 until 2011. Drawing from Schaack, (see Sources consulted)

Hecht's whose early reporting days would be recounted in the play (1928) and film (1974), *The Front Page*, also recalled meeting Schuettler in his autobiography *Gaily, Gaily* (1963). At the time of their encounter Schuettler had already moved far up the Chicago Police chain of command.

I move on to the office of Assistant Superintendent Hermann Schuettler, called "Wooden Shoes" by his admirers. I was interviewing him about the derisive post card he had received from the "hunted bandit". . . (but) I pause in my story to tell a bit of Chief Schuettler, who looms like a hundred melodramas in my memory. Chief Schuettler was a law enforcer as unbelievable as any to be seen on our television screen today. He was a tall, bulky, implacable enemy of crime, honest as the day and courageous as the lion. In his youth as a police lieutenant, Schuettler had made a spectacular capture of the anarchist Louis Lingg, leader of the Haymarket Riot's bomb throwers. . . . That was many years ago, but it was the same stalwart crime hater who spoke out of his chief's chair about Teddy Shedd (the "hunted bandit"). "I'm going to get Teddy Shedd," Chief Schuettler said, "and I promise you this. That murdering little squirt will go to trial with a broken jaw and an ear missing. I'm going to take that bastard apart before I bring him in. You can quote me for that, and I don't care if it costs me my job. He killed two policemen."

Schuettler in his storied police career also broke the case of Adolf Luetgert in 1897, a sausage maker who murdered his wife and then attempted to get rid of her body by dissolving it in a vat of potash in his sausage factory on Diversey at hermitage. In 1890 Schuettler, however, was put on trial for the murder of an Irish American named Bob Gibbons who was enraged over Schuettler's role in solving the murder of Dr. Patrick Henry Cronin whose body was found in a catch basin at Foster and Broadway. Two men,

O'Sullivan and Martin Bourk, caught were put away for life while the third defendant, Dan Coughlin, a CPD police detective, was at first convicted but then acquitted. Sometime afterwards Schuettler encountered Gibbons and two other angry Irish Americans on the street and during a verbal altercation which quickly escalated into a physical confrontation, Schuettler pulled his gun and shot Gibbons who ended up dying as a result. Schuettler, however, was acquitted after pleading self defense.

In 1903 Schuettler was able to get a conviction on Gustave Marx, the ringleader of the "Car Barn Bandits," another highly profiled crime story in the

Chicago press. In 1904 he was appointed Assistant Chief of Police (changed to First Deputy Superintendent in 1913). In 1908 when Police Superintendent George Shippy shot an immigrant laborer, Jeremiah Averbuch, who allegedly had come to his home harboring grievances, Schuettler headed up the investigation which eventually exonerated Shippy.

In January of 1917, Schuettler was appointed

Police Superintendent; what better way to finish up his long and stellar career!, but later that Autumn he suffered a "nervous breakdown." Though he would spend the first half of 1918 in Florida attempting to recover, shortly after his return he suffered a relapse and subsequently passed on in August of 1918. In its obituary the Chicago Tribune stated:

The courage that made Hermann Schuettler the most romantic figure in the police history of Chicago remained with him to the end. His last act was to shake the hands of



HERMANN SCHUETTLE.



MICHAEL HOFFMANN.



MICHAEL WHALEN.



CHAS. REHM.



JOHN STIFT.



JACOB LOEWENSTEIN.

Members of Captain Michael Schaack's elite anti anarchist squad; from *Schaack*, see Sources consulted.

members of his family in a last farewell. . . . Some hours later a group of hospital attendants passed through the corridor of the hospital with a wicker basket bearing the remains of a man whose courage and ability had pushed him up through the ranks to become and be hailed as the greatest police chief Chicago ever had. . . . his integrity and honesty as a public official were never assailed. . . . Hermann Schuettler left behind him as priceless heritage a name untainted and a record of achievement that time will not dim. . . . Chiefly

notable is the fact that through his whole career there was never suggested the smallest hint of dishonesty, an item most noteworthy in connection with a business that has caused the downfall of many men. he was said to have entertained but one great ambition, to be chief of police in Chicago and close his public career in that position. He had been offered the post numerous times, but always refused, considering the term too short and himself too young to think of retiring. When he finally accepted the office, it was with the understanding he would close his police work when he relinquished the baton of chief. That he died "in the harness" was said to be his greatest wish.

"A man whose courage and ability had pushed him up through the ranks to become and be hailed as the greatest police chief Chicago ever had. . . . his integrity and honesty as a public official were never assailed. . . . Hermann Schuettler left behind him as priceless heritage a name untainted and a record of achievement that time will not dim. . . . Chiefly notable is the fact that through his whole career, there was never suggested the smallest hint of dishonesty, an item most noteworthy in connection with a business that has caused the downfall of many men."

(Chicago Tribune, 23 Aug 1918)

with new ones emanating from the harsh and sordid conditions they encountered by laboring in what was soon to not only become America's preeminent industrial city but a national hub for all kinds of rail traffic which made Chicago the twain that connected East with West. The labor riots of this era which grew out of the immigrants' sense of injustice in their workplaces in the New World would eventually sow the seeds of an

American labor union movement that would give all Americans a standard of living that only a few generations later would become the envy of the modern world. From Schuettler's career we can

also detect the undeniable German American footprints and fingerprints in early Chicago. Not only were many of the aforementioned criminals he brought to justice Germans themselves, but so many other players in the historical cast—fellow police officers, police brass, politicians (such as Mayor Fred Busse, 1907 to 1911) and businessmen—of his storied career were as well. Their

Thus is the legacy of Hermann Schuettler whose career spanned the time frame of many GAPA members today but only a hundred years earlier. His era is arguably one the most interesting times in Chicago history.

Scarcely three generations before Chicago was a prairie outpost on the far southwestern shore of Lake Michigan. At Schuettler's birth, the Civil War was just beginning, and urban policing itself was in its infancy. By the start of his career, Chicago's population was teeming with immigrants from all over Europe whose grievances with their old homelands were soon met

mere names and faces add credence and personality to the demographic fact that Germans were Chicago's largest ethnic group at this time. It should also be somewhat ironically, if not tragically, noted that at the very end of Schuettler's career and life in 1918, so much of the proud German American consciousness which had existed during his lifetime would be literally destroyed by and during the anti German

hysteria which reigned supreme in Chicago as well as the rest of United States during World War One.

Mike Haas, GAPA Editor

(Sources: Unless otherwise noted: *www.Achemy of Bones: A History of the Red terror and the Social Revolution in America and Europe*, Michael J. Schaack, 1889, Internet Archive, Library of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.)



Hermann Schuettler (2nd from right) in 1906;
Pic: American Memory No. 0039337

