

Helena Gun Club Host to 54th State Shoot July 16-18



Here is the home of the Helena Gun club, a range complete with nine traps and a clubhouse, located north of the city. It is acclaimed one of the finest, and will be the scene of the 54th annual Montana State Trapshoot. Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The range has been developed by the Helena Gun club members since 1916. The scene above shows only five of the concrete traps. Four more have been added since this picture was taken. The range provides plenty of room for shooters and spectators. More than 200 trapshooters are expected to throng to the range to take part in the State Trapshoot with its \$1,500 cash in added money exclusive of trophies.



This picture shows but a few of the enthusiasts who enjoy their trapshooting at the Helena Gun club range, four miles north of the city. The occasion of this picture-taking was the Helena \$100 added-handicap shoot in 1947, one of the first registered shoots conducted at the new range. Some of the state's outstanding trapshooters are pictured here. They will be back this year for the 54th annual State Trapshoot this coming weekend. They will find a number of improvement made in past year, too.

Nine Spanking New Traps Will Accommodate 400 Scatter-Gunners in Day

Top-Notch Trapshooters of Western Area Expected to Take Part in \$1,500 Prize-Money Tournament

By D. W. Bowler

The Helena Gun club's new nine-trap range, termed one of the best this side of Vandalia, Ohio, the mecca of trapshooters, will attract the northwest's finest scatter-gun artists for the 54th annual State trapshoot July 16-18.

The fame of Helena's range has spread over the northwest because of its capacity for more than 400 shooters a day in five-man

squads and the fact that every trap is alike.

Many outstanding shooters who are competing at Sun Valley this week plan to come to Helena to try their fortunes on the new range.

This new range is the pride and joy of the 65 members, many of whom toiled long hours to make it a reality.

"If the plant were valued in

money it would be worth more than \$20,000, Secretary George Gruner estimates.

"Much of the work was done by Carl Carlson. Let me tell you anyone would have a difficult time telling the difference in the nine traps."

The range is located four miles north of Helena on an area of 40 acres of land owned by the club and another 40 acres that are leased. In addition to the nine concrete traps, the Helena Gun club has a 24 by 36 feet clubhouse with lockers, a cashier's room and kitchen facilities.

Arrangements for the new range came about by force of circumstances. The gun club members were unable to secure a satisfactory title for their Kenwood range they had operated for more than 20 years. They paid taxes on the grounds, tendered rent and "what will you." Finally in desperation and to have a home to call their own they purchased the new site in 1946. And they are not the slightest bit unhappy about the exchange.

The new range is a considerable change from the first traps used by members of the Helena Rod and Gun club when Del Cooper, Sam Balliet, A. J. Fiske, T. J. Cronin and M. Manuel shattered birds. There also have been some considerable changes in the weapons and other equipment.

The first annual State trapshoot was staged in Helena in 1896, according to Secretary Gruner, at the range to the west of Kessler's brewery where there were five hand set and hand thrown-type traps.

"I can remember setting traps in 1901 for Fred Kessler, one of the early day members of the Helena Gun club groups," Gruner recalls.

"That was in the days of the old black powder. Each trap had a barrel of water near by. When the barrels got too hot, and they frequently did, the gunners would 'stick the barrels in the barrels.'"

In all, the Helena Gun club and its antecedents have had six homes. The first was at the Kessler brewery with five hand thrown traps. This range was used until about 1906 when two traps were set up at the Montana State fairgrounds. The gunners returned to the brewery in 1912 and used that range until 1921 when two traps were set up at Fort Harrison.

The move to the Kenwood range was made in 1925 where four traps, hand set and spring fired, were constructed. The new range was opened in 1946 north of the city.

President Bill Kerr, Cliff Stump, Secretary Gruner or anyone of the trap-gun shooters would have a difficult time telling a novice what attracts them to the pastime.

"It just gets you," they'll admit. A few tips the old-timers pass along to the beginners include. "Get a good gun" and forget the past bird, get the next one." "Pay no attention to what you've got, get the next one," is

the advice given by Charles Flanagan, an elderly professional who resides near Cascade. "The next one is always the tough one."

On the subject of guns, don't ever call a trap gun a shotgun, no sir!

A trap gun will do anything that a field gun will do but there is a considerable difference. The trap gun has an air cooled rib along the top that prevents heat waves from rising and blurring the gunners view of his target.

"Shotguns just won't take it in trapshooting," says Gruner, who has fired more than 40,000 rounds with his weapon in the past 20 years.

Along with other preparations, Helena Gun club members have 150,000 rounds of ammunition—and more in reserve—and 170,000 targets for the 54th annual State Trap Shoot.

The gunners will be called to their positions by a public address system. The shooting will start at 8 o'clock in the morning Friday and, because of the nine traps, will conclude about 4 o'clock each afternoon to allow the gunners more time for get-togethers, target shooting or special shoots.

Gene Boyle of Cut Bank has been named cashier of the shoot. He is going to be busier than a doubles shooter when he starts to figure the prize money, regular optional, wolf optional and Calcuttas in which the gunners indulge.

Dewey Hinman and Cliff Bayless will be field captains with referees appointed to call out the doleful word of "lost" or the happy news of "dead" to the gunners at each trap. Secretaries will record the results on boards visible to the shooters by a turn of the head.

Twenty-two of the 23 events on the program will count for the grand championship of Montana with its accompanying trip to the Grand American shoot in Vandalia.

There will be class champions crowned for A, B and C titles in the 16-yard singles, handicap and doubles with husband-and-wife, women's and juniors' crowns also to be won.

The only event not counting toward the grand championship is No. 5 on Friday. That is the Butte

Gus Frazier at 85 Is One of Most Active Shooters

One of the oldest active trapshooters in the west, 85-year-old Gus Frazier of Great Falls, will be among the shooters at the 54th annual state trapshoot here Friday, Saturday and Sunday of this week.

Some of the other experts to be here are Earl H. Colson, Jr., of Tacoma who averaged 98.44 birds out of 100 in 3,000 shots last year; Arthur Meehan of Spokane, Hugh Crossen of Gardiner, winner of the 1947 Montana shoot and the Grand American handicap at Vandalia; Ted Renfro of Dell, and Ray Loring of Vandalia, manager of the American Trapshooting association.

Horse Express

Supai, Ariz.—This U. S. post office in an Indian community at the bottom of the Grand canyon is one of the few to which mail is still delivered only by horse or mule.

Rod and Gun shoot of 40 targets. This is one of the traditions of the State trapshoot in its sponsorship under the Montana State Sportsman's association headed by John Alley.

A rough estimate is that somewhere in the neighborhood of one half the entries will win some prize or other during the three-day shoot. The remainder will get their satisfaction out of some fine shooting on a top notch range and the renewal of friendships.

The prizes are to be shot at—\$1,500 cash in added money exclusive of trophies and the various optional selected by the gunners, trap gunners that is.

Helena Club Boasts But One Champ, State Has Several

Despite its active role in the history of Montana trapshooting, the Helena Gun club has had only one state grand champion.

Many long years ago in 1920, Pat H. O'Brien won the state and then went on to Vandalia to win the North American doubles with 92 birds out of 100.

Last year's champion was Hugh Crossen of Gardiner, who won the singles in addition to the combined crown. Bob Poore of Butte won the handicap and Ted Renfro the doubles.

Harbor Is New

Haifa—(P)—The deep water harbor for Haifa, Palestine, was not completed until 1933.

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Ken Beegle, Added Attraction at State Tournament

Ken Beegle, famous Remington-Peters professional trapshooter, will be presented by the Montana State Sportsman's association immediately following the finish of the Montana State Handicap championship shoot at the Helena Gun club range.

Beegle will stage all sorts of shooting for the amazement and amusement of the gunners and spectators.

Beegle is reputed to be one of the outstanding exhibition shooters in the world.

Trapshooters Scatter Lead By "the Ton"

More Than 20 Tons Recovered From "Placer Mining"

When trapshooters gather, lead is scattered from breakfast to wherever good birds go, as they skim out of the traps at a speed of from 40 to 50 miles an hour.

Some of the lead is recovered when the club members decide it is time to placer mine the range.

Just before the Helena Gun club moved to the new range north of the city the Kenwood range was worked for lead. Workers sluiced seven tons of pellets from the earth. This brought to more than 20 tons the amount of lead taken from the range in its 20 years of use.

For a mathematical problem to determine how many shots were fired, just divide one and one-eighth ounces into 20 tons. That doesn't include the amount that was not recovered.

The birds, made of clay, disintegrate and return to the earth from whence they came.

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