Cedar County—Schützenfest, Bow Valley NE
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The lucky person to knock the bird off a pole becomes Schützenfest royalty!

When German immigrants founded Bow Valley in the late 1800s, the tradition of Schützenfest made its way to Cedar County as well. Originating as a town militia in Germany, the Schützenverein, or shooting club, held marksmanship competitions—Schützenfests—that also featured other forms of social interaction. Once a year a competition would be held to identify the best shooter in the community and name him king of the festival. Bow Valley began their form of the celebration in 1896 and has continued the tradition by inviting locals to dress in uniforms and attempt to knock a wooden bird off a thirty-foot pole with a well-aimed rifle shot. The best sharpshooter is crowned king and then names his queen to help him preside over the festivities.

Applicable Nebraska Social Studies Standards (Grade 4):

**Geography**
The World in Spatial Terms (4.3.1.a. Read local and state maps and atlases to locate physical and human features in Nebraska)
Places and Regions (4.3.2.b. Classify regions and places within the state of Nebraska using physical and human features) and (4.3.2.c. Identify and classify regions)
Human Systems (4.3.4.a. Compare and contrast patterns of culture within the state of Nebraska)

**History**
Historical Comprehension (4.4.2.a. Describe and explain the relationships among historical people, events, ideas and symbols including various cultures and ethnic groups in Nebraska by era) and (4.4.2.b. Describe how Nebraska and the Great Plains Region have changed over the course of time using maps, documents and other artifacts)
Historical Analysis and Interpretation (4.4.4.e. Describe the relationships among historical events in Nebraska and the students’ lives today)

A Few Quick Facts About Cedar County:
- Cedar County was formed in 1857
- It is named for the great number of cedar trees that grow there
- The area of Cedar County is 74 square miles
- Hartington is the County Seat
According to historians, three communities in Cedar County can claim a distant link to British royalty: Coleridge (Lord Coleridge), Randolph (Lord Randolph Churchill) and Hartington (Lord Hartington). All three Britons had visited the US about the time the town sites were being established.

The history of Cedar County can be traced back to the 1650s when the Omaha Native Americans lived along the Bow Creek area.

Discussion Questions:

- Why do we preserve traditions like the Schtzenfest?
- Does your family have traditions that have been carried down through the generations? If so, what are they? From what country or ethnic group do these traditions originate?
- Who were the Omaha?

Additional Resources:
Nebraska’s Immigration History [http://sdn.unl.edu/ne_immigration_history](http://sdn.unl.edu/ne_immigration_history)
History of Cedar County [http://www.co.cedar.ne.us/webpages/history/history.html](http://www.co.cedar.ne.us/webpages/history/history.html)
The Immigration Experience [http://www.nebraskastudies.org/0500/frameset_reset.html](http://www.nebraskastudies.org/0500/frameset_reset.html)