



Luxembourg Heritage Society of Southern Minnesota



NEWSLETTER

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Fall, 2008

Luxembourg Food Fest

On Sunday, July 27th members of the Luxembourg Heritage Society of Southern Minnesota gathered in one of the gazebos at Hermann Heights Park in New Ulm. In addition to being a nice clean place with adequate picnic tables and food serving counters, we were literally in the shadow of the 102' tall monument to the ancient German hero – Hermann. The Luxembourg flag flew proudly in the gazebo to show Hermann that we are not Germans, though!

Attending were Ron Schmitz, Steve Vecelus and his fiancé' Kay Helling, Waldine and Woody Guth, Terry Sveine and Bob Arens, with Bob Mersch stopping by for a quick visit. Many of us knew each other but "the Bobs" were new to all of us, including to each other.

Just getting to know new people made the afternoon worthwhile, but there were special treats in store, beyond the great food. Bob A. brought his lap-top computer and shared some family tree findings from his thousands and thousands of family names he has recorded! Steve brought a few of his interesting pedigree charts, showing how he is related to numerous royal families from Europe (see his article in this Newsletter) and others of us just visited and shared stories.

The focus of the day -Luxembourger food- did not disappoint! Bob A.'s grilled treipen with lingonberry sauce is a treat that I bet very few Luxembourgers have had. Ron's peach tart and Steve's apple cake were great, Waldine's potato salad was super and Terry's rouladen was surprisingly good ... (he doesn't cook much!)



We ended the day giving Bob A. a short tour of New Ulm, including showing the Luxembourger evidences in the Holy Trinity Cathedral before he headed back to St. Paul.

Despite the smaller-than-expected turnout, those who came had a super time and we look forward to repeating this event next year. Get your cookbooks out!

Of Luxembourg Heritage/Ancestors of Luxembourg

Having discovered quite recently my Luxembourg background, I decided to research the lineage as far back as possible. The first known direct descendant, while not a parent or grandparent and not even a great-great grandparent, was a 14th-great grandparent! Although this may seem to be quite a distant relation to some, it does not take from the real fact that one inherits certain characteristics from our ancestors as well as being of the same bloodline.

The first of my research began with my father's line. It went from 5th through 13th generational ancestors of Belgian/Dutch descent. The family names of Vescelius / Gardenier / VandenBergh to Van Voorhoudt / Egmont (Egmond). My 14th great grandfather, Jan II D'Egmont, born about 1499, married a young lady named Francoise De Luxembourg, born, est. 1483/1500, Countess of Luxembourg, Princess of Gavre. Prior to the discovery of this illustrious name, I had been researching since 1999 the family names that I stumbled upon. I used the searching facilities of the New Ulm Public Library, searching books, computer, genealogical periodicals, newspapers and the Latter Day Saints Research Library in North Mankato, with microfilm records, census records, Parish records, Burke's Peerage and the generosity of many fellow researchers in contributing their time and efforts towards my endeavors. The Mankato Public Library with its research facilities was also a good source of information.

Also with the help of family records and the finding of "new" cousins, discovered from the "internet" sharing their family histories with me, I progressed faster in my search. Checking my records, sometimes from four, five or more sources, I was reassured that my lineages were correct.

In 1999/2000, having discovered royal lineage from many nations, I was told that when someone locates royal records, the transition from stumbling to moving quickly through history becomes easier. And with each new-found surname, came other ancestral lines with royal or not-so-royal connections.

My father's lineage from the Dutch line led to Francoise De Luxembourg, but also on my paternal side, through and English ancestry, I made another connection to Luxembourg. More of that ancestry later.



I would like to mention some of the lineage of Francoise of Luxembourg. Francoise's father was Count Jacques II of Luxembourg-Fiennes who married Baroness Marie of Berlaymont-Ville-Hamaide. Count Jacques I's father was Thibault, Count of Luxembourg-Maans and his wife Baroness Philippa of Melun-Sottenghein. And my 18th Great-grandparents, Thibault's father, Count Pierre of Luxembourg, and mother Princess Margarete of Baux, born about 1394 in Luxembourg. Her father was Francoise II, Dule of Andria (Francisco del Balzo) who married Justina Sueva Orsini.

As mentioned before, I researched an English name from my father's lineage. This line went from Vescelus (Vescelius)/ Corpe / Fuller, Wilmarth/Wheatley to my 10th Great-grandmother Mary Fiennes, whose father was George Gregory Fiennes, son of Baron Dacre, Thomas Fiennes, married to Mary Neville. Mary's father was Baron George Neville, married to Mary Stafford

Baroness Abergavenny Stafford. Mary Stafford's father was Edward Stafford, 3rd Duke of Buckingham and was my 14th Great-grandfather. Edward's father was Henry Stafford, 2nd Duke of Buckingham married to Duchess Catherine Wydeville (Woodville). Catherine's father was Earl Richard Wydeville, 1st Earl of Rivers, who married Duchess Jacueta De Luxembourg, (Sister of Thibault) born about 1415/16 and these were my 16th Great-grandparents. The lineage descends from there to Jacquetta's father, Pierre de Luxembourg, Comte. De Pol de Brienne and spouse of Princess Margarete De Baux.

Count Pierre's father was Jean II de Luxembourg, Count de Brienne, son of Count Guy de Luxembourg, son of Jean I de Luxembourg and his wife Baroness Alix, Countess of Flanders. Jean I's father was Valeran II. Count de Luxembourg, son of Valerna I. Count de Luxembourg, my 22nd Great-grandfather. Valeran I's father, Count Heinrich II (Henry V) Graf von Luxembourg, "The Blonde" Count of Luxembourg, married Margarethe, Dame de Ligny, born about 1220 in Luxembourg.

I then did some research on my mother's lineage. Her maternal side descends from my Grandmother, Strode/Akens to Robert Brent III born about 1280 in England whose father Sir Robert Brent II married Isabella De Montague. The Montague lineage descends through Kings of Norway to Earl, Toste Siwardsson who married Countess Iruiza Ermentrude "The Great" Luxembourg, my 30th Great-grandmother. Iruiza's father, Frederick I Luxembourg, Count of Luxembourg, Count of Salm, son of Siegfried De Luxembourg, Count of Luxembourg married to Hedwig Von Nordgau, born in Germany.

So I definitely feel "connected," otherwise known as related to Ancestors of Luxembourg. So keep searching for your ancestors because you never know if you might be related to a royal heritage that lies just around the corner!

By: **Stephen J. Vescelus** - member Luxembourg Heritage Society of Southern Minnesota ... 2008

(Editor's Note:

Stephen is a wonderful man who knows his stuff and tells it in an interesting manner. He has lovely cartographic scrolls with hand-drawn lineages that lead in many surprising paths.

As can be expected, when a royal line has been discovered, it is not surprising that they tended to marry those with similar status, and so Stephen is related to many, many royal families with several kings and queens, many whose names we all would recognize.

Attend some of our LHS functions and meet this interesting man who is a walking encyclopedia of history, including knowledge of many of Luxembourg's most shining stars!)

Myth -vs.- Reality !

I have noticed a curious tendency among some of my colleagues to overly romanticize what life in modern Luxembourg is like. Having been fortunate to have been to Europe many times (including Luxembourg twice), I could be accused of being kind of a "know-it-all," but my experience as a travel agent- with the chance to travel many places- has kept me in touch with the reality of the situation.

On the other hand, who could blame someone for thinking that life is still lived in an old-fashioned manner? As members of this organization, with our stated purpose of "...*striving to understand the culture, history and legacy of our Luxembourg ancestors...*" we spend a great deal of time researching our family roots and emigration from Luxembourg. This involves using old photographs and descriptions that, indeed, depict life from a different time period. Brochures and web-sites touting the

highlights of travel to Luxembourg always show castles, cathedrals, old buildings and other aspects of life from centuries ago. Rarely are new structures shown. It is human nature to long for "the good old days" and modernity, as portrayed by newer buildings, doesn't fit that image. Tourism promotion tries to draw you into a simpler and more "romantic" world.

I think that *intellectually* people know that life in modern Europe (and much of the world for that matter!) is rife with most of the trappings of life that 21st century Americans enjoy. Cel-phones, computers, steel and glass structures, automobiles and motorcycles, air-conditioning and goods from around the world all contribute to make their lives very similar to our own. In our head we *know* this, but I think that instinctively, probably due to the reasons cited above, we are always somewhat surprised when faced with evidence of a modern, Western life-style in Luxembourg.

One way to dispel the myths is to look at news and happenings in modern Luxembourg. These examples are taken from a variety of news sources, including "The Station Network" - Luxembourg's central, on-line, English-language information service. (It is free and I find it fascinating. Find it on the internet and subscribe!)

*Mark Knopfler, from the rock band "Dire Straits," is giving a concert in Luxembourg City.
*A seminar on biologic and synthetic polymers is being given in Useldange.

*The British Chamber of Commerce is exploring the financial relationships between the U.K. and Luxembourg.
*An anti-smoking rally is held in Lux. City, showing the danger of second-hand smoke.

*A new national law requires reflective jackets to be used when working on stalled cars.
* "Counting Crows," an American rock band from the 1990s, is giving a concert in Lux City.

*Police arrested gang members for smuggling cocaine from Brazil into Luxembourg.
*A major traffic accident near Esch-sur-Alzette blocked highway traffic on the A4 motorway.

*A beach volleyball tournament was held in Lux City, despite there being no beach nearby.
*LuxAir is considering buying new aircraft, but how many will be affected by rising fuel costs.

*Prefalux, a Luxembourg company, just built the world's only emission-free, research station in Antarctica.
*Lux City's City Hall has new paintings by a local artist who uses "defragmented light" for her "quasi-abstract" works of art.

I hope these examples give insight into the very modern aspects of life in Luxembourg in 2008! While Luxembourg has many sights, customs and traditions to bring you close to your 1800's ancestors' lives and they hold dear to the sense of their past, they are still modern citizens in a very modern world, just like us.



Observations on Genealogy, Heritage & Personal Preferences-II

(..... continued from the Spring Newsletter.....)

Since it's probably fair to assume that most Americans are a mix of at least two different nationalities, I wonder how and why we identify with the ones we do? In my case, I am about 50% Norwegian, 30% Luxembourger and 10% each German and Bohemian. Why have I virtually ignored the two 10% relations and concentrated heavily on the other two? I don't know, but I don't think it's just because they are a larger per-centage. Perhaps, by coming from the heavily Germanic town of New Ulm, it might even be a subconscious way for me to say that "I'm different from most of you."

Here's a scenario to think about: do my children have a different regard for the importance of their heritage than I do based on the percentages of that heritage? By marrying a woman with 100% German heritage, it changed my sons' percentages from what mine are. They are now 55% German, 25% Norwegian, 15% Luxembourger and 5% Bohemian! When we proudly proclaim to be "any % of anything," do we realize that it has, and will continue to, change through the generations? Does this change give us reason to doubt any claims of ethnic primacy - or should it? I don't know the answer, but at minimum it should make us look at racial bigots with suspicion and to marvel at their stupidity! "Racial purity" is virtual nonsense.

Is there a prestige associated with being one nationality or the other? I'm not sure, but I know that one of our LHS members contacted me early in the formation of our group as she was trying in earnest to make the connections to some possible Luxembourg ancestors. I remember her coming to my work and showing me how she finally made the legitimate connection. She could now claim to be Luxembourger and she was proud of that! (Who could blame her for wanting to be Luxie, right?!)

Also, have you noticed that we tend to identify our national heritage as being from a certain time period? I'll explain - when we say "what we are," is it based on the nationality of our ancestors that came to America? Or is it based as far back as we have data from? For example, what if by further study you found that one generation back from what you now have data on, that your Luxembourg ancestors had migrated from France? Would you now be French instead of, or in addition to, being Luxembourger? What if you have an ancestor who came from Scotland to Canada, married a fellow Scottish immigrant, had a child and then came to America. Do you claim Canada AND Scotland or just Scotland, since Canada was just a stopping point before coming to America? I think many of us would be comfortable citing all of our ancestral possibilities, but it does pose an interesting question.

With "our Luxembourg" having had numerous border changes and reductions, how do we address the issue of national changes? Are we secure in claiming Luxembourg ancestry if where our people came from *is* currently in Belgium, but *was* part of Luxembourg when that ancestor came to America? Conversely, do we have any claim on Belgian heritage in that scenario? This and other questions I have raised are merely food for thought. I don't think there's an inherent right or wrong. I am fascinated by the concept of personal identity and the specific choices each individual makes when claiming an ancestry.

A few closing thoughts here...I remember my mother's lack of enthusiasm when I was discovering information about generation after generation of my -and her!- ancestors. "Why are you so excited about this? You don't even know these people," she said. I recall my instant, although previously unthought of, reply which surprised me for its succinct grasp of why we all study family history. I said, "Oh, I know them, I just haven't met them."

People study family history for a variety of reasons: some because it is simply a fascinating hobby based on discovery and research; some to understand themselves and where they came from; some to learn details of their family and to share that. There is no right or wrong reason for it, but it can reveal much about ourselves and bring forth pride in our ancestors. Give it a try, but be forewarned - it can be addicting! Terry Sveineor... Schmitz, Tauer, Skarpohl, Arnoldi, Bjorli, etc. ...!

MEMBERSHIP

Here we welcome the next batch of new members since the last Newsletter in April.

We will continue to list new members in this section with the member's name and the names of their Luxembourg ancestors as they join. *Please notify us if we have forgotten you!*

New Members

Janet Mielke

Ancestors' Names

Filzen

*Remember to send in your payment and feel free to ask others to join.

***The fees are:** \$20 for a single per year, \$25 for a couple, and \$50 for a business.

*Applications can be gotten by sending to Terry Sveine for now, until we have a Post Office Box address.

2009 Dues are Due by the end of the Year

Please send us your 2009 L.H.S. Dues by December 15 for 2009. We rely on membership dues for our operating budget. For example, low funds are why there was no Summer Newsletter! Make the check to "Luxembourg Heritage Society of Southern Minnesota" and send to the return address on this letter.

*******Pioneer Biography*******

Peter Geschwind

Peter Geschwind, one of the early Luxembourg pioneers of Brown County, came to Sleepy Eye in 1871, a year before the railroad reached the city. During his lifetime, he held various public offices and contributed to the growth and development of the City of Sleepy Eye.

Peter was born April 6, 1852 in Echternacht, Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. His parents were Steffen and Gertrude (Jacoby) Geschwind. Steffen died when Peter was a young boy. Peter and his mother immigrated to the United States when he was nineteen. They landed in New York, went directly to Chicago and then came to Sleepy Eye, Brown County, Minnesota.

The town of Sleepy Eye was just being established when Peter and Gertrude arrived. Gertrude married widower Valentine Krier, also a Luxembourger, soon after they arrived in Sleepy Eye. Peter spent a year in Sleepy Eye and then found work in Menominee, Wisconsin in the pine lumber industry as a log scaler. He remained in Wisconsin for several years, moving back to Sleepy Eye in 1877.

Peter married Amelia Piehl on November 11, 1878. Peter was 26 years old and Amelia was 19 years old at the time of their marriage. Ten children born to this union. They were

Gertrude Emelia (1879); John Peter (1880); Mary Rosina (1882); Anna Elizabeth (1884); Stephen Michael (1887); Ida Catherine (1890); twins Francis Frederick and Peter Aloysius (1892); William Edward (1894); and Loretta Louisa (1899).

In politics, Peter was a Democrat. On that ticket he made the race for county sheriff, but was defeated by a small majority. Peter served as Sleepy Eye's first Municipal Judge, presiding over many marriages and small court matters. He served as assessor of Sleepy Eye for eight years, was City Clerk as well as a member of the City Council. On September 1, 1894, Peter was appointed Post Master in Sleepy Eye, a position he held for the next seven years.

Peter was among the many Luxembourgers active in the founding of St. Mary's Catholic Church in Sleepy Eye. He was also a founding member of the St. John's Society within that church.

Peter valued education and did his best to encourage his children to graduate high school. Peter wrote poetry, often penning an ode for special family occasions. Some of the grandchildren remembered his rather lengthy reading of these poems. He played French horn in the community band.

Around 1900, Peter became part owner of the Iberia Roller Mill at Iberia, a small community a few miles south of Sleepy Eye. His partner in this endeavor was Bernard Schueller.

In 1913, Peter invested in cotton farm land near Beeville, Texas. He lived in Texas for fourteen years managing his farm and working as a salesman. His sons, Mike, Pete, Frank and Bill joined him in Texas at various times to help work the farm. His daughter Ann also lived in Texas for a time. Loretta remained in Sleepy Eye, living with her sister Rose.

Peter Geschwind returned to Sleepy Eye in 1927 and spent the remainder of his life residing at the home of his daughter Rose MacMaster. He died on October 1, 1938. He is buried beside his wife, his mother and his two small daughters in the church cemetery. The Geschwind grave site is in the southwest corner of the cemetery very near the land that Peter and Amelia owned and farmed.

Some of the papers from Peter's years as Municipal Judge as well as some of his personal writings have been deposited in the Minnesota History Society's Regional Archives at Mankato, Minnesota.

By: Gail Christiansen,

descendant of Peter Geschwind.



Luxembourg Heritage Society

c/o Terry Sveine
904 North Minnesota
New Ulm, MN 56073

Luxembourg Facts and Trivia

- *After World War II, in defiance of Germany, many of the Luxembourg villages that ended in the suffix "-dingen" were changed to the French version "-dange" ("donj"). For example, my ancestors came from *Dommeldingen*, but it is now *Dommeldange*.
- *Luxembourg's climate is not terribly different from that of southern Minnesota, although not as severe as our summer or winter. January average afternoon temperatures are 36 degrees and July is 74 degrees.
- *In 1383 "Good King Wenceslaus" died as ruler of Luxembourg (and Bohemia, of course) and his nephew, Wenceslaus II, took control. He was a poor ruler and at one point he even used Luxembourg as security to pay off a loan for his gambling debts!

Membership Events

- *mid-January Annual Meeting

LHS Board Meetings open to all members

- *October 30

- *November 26

(subject to change due to Thanks-giving.)