



Luxembourg Heritage Society of Southern Minnesota



NEWSLETTER

Volume 3 / Edition 1

Spring, 2008

Future Plans of L.H.S.

Discussion at January's Annual Meeting echoed discussions that the Board has also had for several months. That is, to expand our knowledge base and to extend our network of similar-minded people **by visiting other Luxembourg Societies in our region.**

There are two Societies that we are looking closely at visiting. In May, we hope to visit the Luxembourg Society of Rollingsstone, MN, in the same-named town located 10 miles north of Winona. This charming, small community set in the wide Mississippi River Valley, has been cited as one of the premier cities in America with strong Luxembourgish roots. They have a museum and other tangible evidence of their Luxembourg settlement and have several public Luxembourgish celebrations throughout the year. A wonderful book has been written by one of their people that serves as a clear indicator of how serious they take their heritage. We hope to do this in mid-May to coincide with the showing of a film that the national Society (LACS) is taking on tour about life in Luxembourg. By all accounts the film alone is worth the trip! Details are still being worked as this Newsletter goes to press.

The second one is the Luxembourg Heritage Society of N.W. Iowa in Remsen, IA. Remsen is located about two hours southwest of Sleepy Eye, perhaps 40 miles from the MN/IA border. Communications have been made by e-mail, telephone and in-person with some of their leadership (Rick Roder and Bob Gaul, in particular) and they welcome having us come to visit them. It looks like we can go see them in June or July and the plan is to go on a Saturday, stay overnight and come home Sunday. They will show us their attractions, share traditions and stories, and enjoy an evening together. It should be a great time and is intended to be very relaxed and informal, and should go a long way to sharing, learning and making new friends. We'll keep the membership apprized of the details, but feel free to contact any of the Board.

By meeting with these like-minded groups we hope to:

1. Expand our understanding of how to structure and **operate our Society.**
2. Learn first-hand about Luxembourgish **traditions and celebrations** they hold.
3. Meet people with the same interests and **make new friends.**
4. Revitalize our organization with ideas of how we can **better achieve our goals** of... "Understanding the culture, history and legacy of our Luxembourger ancestors and to learn about modern Luxembourg, too."

Please join us on these outings. We believe the experience will be invaluable to our organizations' growth, but more importantly, it will be **FUN** making new friends!

Olga Shines!

Our first, full-membership Annual Meeting took place on January 19, 2008 at the Orchid Inn in Sleepy Eye. We had 19 people in attendance, somewhat less than expected considering our membership total is 38 members (with spouses and friends also eligible to come welcome). However, those in attendance didn't worry about who didn't make it, we were too busy having a great time!

A Social Hour began at 6:00pm and guests were welcomed with old-time concertina music by our Treasurer, Gene Bertrand. One of the joys of this meeting was to put names and faces together as we enthusiastically got to know our fellow members and shared stories. Commonly heard phrases around the room were, "...how are you related to...", "...my ancestors came from...", and "...it's so good to finally meet you!"

A family-style meal followed at 7:00pm with plenty of fine food from the staff at "The Orchid." More good conversation followed the plates and bowls around the tables.



President Sveine gave a quick introduction of the Board members and briefly explained the organization's history, goals and a few notices of upcoming events were made. The highlight of the evening began with the introduction of LHS member, Olga (Weiss) Carlson. Olga was born in Esch-sur-Alzette in the extreme southwest of Luxembourg and currently lives in St. Peter, MN.

She gave us a well-rounded overview of Luxembourg, adapting her notes from a presentation she recently gave at Mankato State University. She touched on some of Luxembourg's cultural customs, geography, major cities, industries and commerce, climate and travel highlights. She emphasized her presentation by using "props" from a table-full of Luxembourg mementos she had on display. She used things such as newspaper and magazines, photographs, everyday items like coffee and tea servers, her father's identity card and more to illustrate her points.

She followed with a 30-minute slide show (Thanks, slide-master, Jim Vickery!) of sights from around the country, many of which were taken in Olga's youth. She said, "Never mind the girl in the photos, the buildings and sites don't change, only she did," referring to herself in her younger years. Questions from the audience were answered masterfully and to satisfaction.

We ended the evening with more visiting between new and old friends, by looking at the displays of Luxembourg items Olga and other LHS members had brought (books, posters, maps, etc.) and declared the evening a rousing success. Be sure to attend next year – this was something special!

Observations on Genealogy, Heritage and Personal Preferences

As I began my odyssey of trying to understand my roots by collecting family history in 1997, it soon became apparent that this was not going to progress in the logical manner I had suspected it would. I assume all of us genealogists begin the same way, that is, we start gathering the easy and most obvious information about our immediate family from parents, siblings, uncles, aunts, etc. But in short order we usually find that there is unknown data on a certain family line and we generally abandon that line in favor of more readily available information.

After a while it becomes obvious that the symmetrical "family tree" we had hoped to organize, was by now a strange looking "plant" indeed, with long "branches" going off in directions we never expected and other "shrubs" ending with far too little information.

In my case, with my mother's "Schmitz" family by then proven to be Luxembourger and not German, as she believed, I was faced with an unexpected discovery – I was not who I thought I was! Coming from the very Germanic town of New Ulm, where I had participated with gusto in the many German traditions and customs still practiced there, I now had to rethink if these were important to me, since their cultural importance now belonged to a very small per-centage of my heritage. In fact, I used to answer people who questioned my "Germanity" when they learned of my Norwegian family name by saying that "my mom's a Schmitz." That German-sounding name always "validated" me in their eyes.

Another discovery I made was that some people, instead of being as excited as I was when I told them I had discovered that we were related, seemed unsure of, or unimpressed, by that announcement. "How do you figure that?" was a common reply and when I elaborated that, for example, we shared the same great-great-grandfather (which is a very legitimate relationship!) they often dismissed it as being too far off to matter. I also found that when I shared a "relationship by marriage" that many people totally dismissed it saying that we weren't really "related" just by virtue of marriage. When I reminded them that their parents were "related by marriage" that still seemed to gain no legitimacy for my argument. My wife, who is not really interested in family lore to any degree at all, said I might be better received by using the term "connected" instead of "related," as people would seem to find that more palatable. In fact, she was right, people have been more receptive to learning about a "connection" than a "relation." I don't full know why, but it seems to have worked!

Speaking of being "related by marriage," I often wonder why it seems to be normal to identify with the male line of our heritage - even for women. People seem to identify with a certain family name and often don't concern themselves too much with the female line. Is it because the female lines change names with each successive female generation and therefore loses continuity? Certainly we *intellectually* know that family names blend in each generation, but do we *instinctively* think about all of our "lost" female ancestors who contributed equally to our genetic make-up? We should.

It was at this point that I discovered another strange genealogical phenomenon – the depth of "relation" that some people are willing to accept. Most of us family historians have no problem finding acceptable bonds with someone with whom we share a common ancestor -no matter how far back. To others, anyone beyond a 1st cousin is called that ill-defined term of "shirt-tail," as in, "Oh, I think we might be shirt-tail relations. I think our dads were cousins." I'm sorry, but that term sounds just too "hill-billy-ish" for me. Relations are relations and they don't end after one or two generations. I guess I just don't understand why others seem to limit their family to that narrow range. Of course, it's their right to accept who they want to be important in their life, but I still don't understand it. Maybe we should only elect genealogists as politicians since we'd never want to go to war against anyone – heavens, we're probably related to them! (Continued in the next Newsletter... by: Terry Sveine)

Luxembourger Descendant is Crowned "Miss Sleepy Eye"

On April 5, 2008, Amanda Schmitz was crowned "Miss Sleepy Eye" in the 61st annual contest held in this south-central Minnesota town of 4,000 people.

The unusual sounding town name recalls the Dakota Indian chief who lived there with his hooded, "sleepy-looking" eyes. Many Luxembourgers settled there in the 1850-70s and several of their descendants make up today's membership and Board of the LHS!

Eighteen-year old Schmitz is the great-great-granddaughter of Jacob Nicholas Schmitz who came to southern Minnesota with his brother, Peter, and sister, Mary, in 1857. They were the advance party checking on suitable settlement locations for their family who soon joined them from Dommeldingen (Dommeldange), Luxembourg.

Amanda plans to major in Social Work at Southwest State University in Marshall, MN. Her high school interests are volleyball, basketball, 4H, Track and Student Council.

Her parents, Tony and Lisa, still work the family farm begun by "J.N." and Tony's parents, Pete and Rita Schmitz also live on the farm site in their retirement. Congratulations, Amanda!



MEMBERSHIP

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

Sue Deppe

Marg Beiser

Kevin Ries

Ancestors' Names

Hoffmann, Huitgen, Heiter and Lux

Arnoldi, Wetor

Many from Rollingstone, MN

**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.*

VISITORS FROM THE "OLD COUNTRY"

Our friend, Rene Daubenfeld from Luxembourg, has set the date for his next visit to Minnesota. He will be leading a group of Luxembourgers to the Midwest and will be in our area September 1-3.

Details are not yet set, but one itinerary item is agreed on. On either September 1 (or 2), after a day of touring, the group will meet at Terry and Ellie Sveine's house in New Ulm (904 North Minnesota) for an evening of "good old American fun!" We will serve the group grilled hot dogs, hamburgers, potato salad, pickles, chips and other typical American picnic food.

This will be an informal gathering with picnic tables set-up in and around the Sveine garage with beer and pop from coolers to accompany the food. Rene would like his people to see what gatherings of this type would be for Americans. We will do introductions all around, sing a few American folk songs – from which our guests will reciprocate with some of their native songs! - and share photo albums of our families. (Other ideas are welcome.) Plan on a great night of fun and a chance to make new friends.

Everyone reading this is invited to attend! We only ask that you let us know if you're coming so food and drink orders can be made. (Contact Terry Sveine at the address on the Newsletter or at 507-354-1123 or tesss@newulmtel.net)

Look at Rene's web-site for details at - www.webplaza.pt.lu/public/haffren . You can also see pictures of his past visits to America. We encourage you to send him words of welcome and friendship!



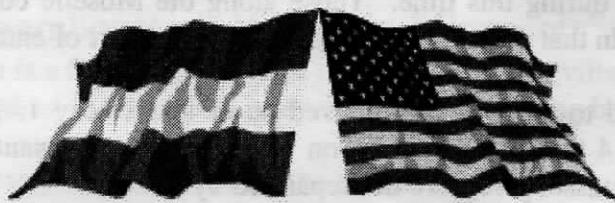
Luxembourg American Cultural Society - News

Big Summer Conference!

Mark your calendars for August 7-10 this summer and try to attend the 2nd Annual LACS Cultural Conference in Port Washington, WI. The event this year will look to top last year's successful gathering with a wide array of seminars on topics covering Luxembourg culture, history, genealogy and traditions. Lodging options are outlined on their web-site in their quarterly Newsletter.

You can find more details at their web-site at www.luxamculturalsocietyu.org or by writing to:

L.A.C.S. / P.O. Box 614 / Port Washington, WI 53074 -or call- 262-355-5758.



Luxembourg American
CULTURAL SOCIETY, INC.

Pioneer Biography

Michael and Anna (Wetor) Arnoldi

Michael Arnoldi was born in 1826 in Wehr, Nanning, Prussia to Johann Arnoldi and Anna Maria Backes. Michael served in the Prussian army for 2 ½ years and was discharged in 1851. The documents I have from Niederanven, Luxembourg, show his occupation as a linen weaver.

A marriage registry for Niederanven, Canton Luxembourg, shows Michael and Catherine Wetor being married on January 16, 1854. Catherine was born in Oberanven, Luxembourg to Henri Wetor and Anna Thinnes.

(In response to my question, Jean Ensich, a respected authority on Luxembourg and author, replied that married women always appear with their maiden names on official documents. This goes back to a decree at the time of the French Revolution, 23 August 1794, which states that no citizen shall bear any other first or last name than those mentioned in his birth record.)

Catherine died on December 6th, 1854 at the age of 23 and the document does not state the cause of death.

The marriage registry shows Michael marrying Anna Wetor on May 14, 1855. Anna was born February 2, 1836. This marriage document refers to the death of Catherine and all the other parties remain the same so Catherine and Anna were sisters.

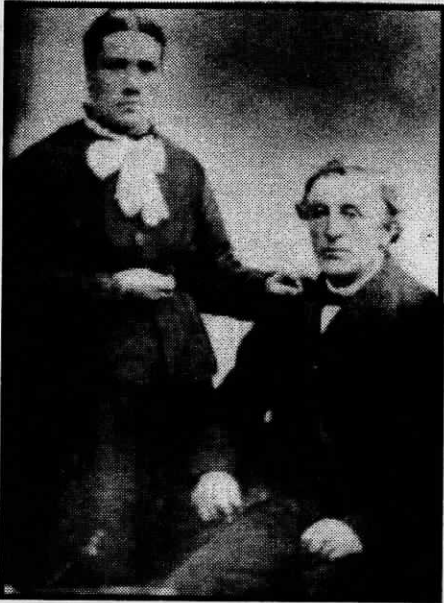
Mathias Arnoldi was born to Michael and Anna on December 14, 1856 and came to this country with his parents when he was 3 months old.

While we don't the exact reason for the Arnoldis' emigration, the agricultural harvests in the early 1850's were not great. Farmers had hardly enough money to pay for seed. Emigration seemed to be the trend. Michael was not avoiding military service because he had already served. The government tried to dissuade Luxembourgers from leaving for America, going so far as to suggest going instead to Hungary and other countries along the Danube and painting a bleak picture of America. By 1857 emigration had not abated and the people were given warnings about the dangers of the journey.

According to Gonner's book, Luxembourgers in the New World, 1857 saw the largest number of emigrants from Luxembourg. It is estimated that between 1851 and 1860, 6,000 emigrants left for the New World. I have no information as to the Arnoldis' port of departure; however, Antwerp became another port of embarkation during this time. Those along the Moselle could use the waterways or they could also take a train. In that decade New York became the port of entry.

Michael and Anna emigrated to the U.S. and arrived on or about May 1, 1857. The voyage would have taken anywhere from 14 to 100 days. Life on board was not pleasant. Water could be scarce, fighting could break out and passengers were not separated by sex.

It is said that they came directly to Brown County. Michael wasted no time and declared his intention to become a citizen on June 8th, 1857. They farmed 154 acres in Milford, Brown County, and the deed was filed for record on November 27th, 1865.



(<...Anna and Michael Arnoldi)

At the time of the Indian uprising, Michael moved his family to Shakopee, MN where they lived for two years before returning to their farm. (This is from the "History of Minnesota Valley" 1882, page 727.)

Michael was enlisted as a private for a short time during the Indian War from 8/19/62 to 8/24/1862. He was called into service by Sheriff Roos of Brown County. His regiment participated in all encounters with the enemy at New Ulm. Two from this company were killed and two others were wounded. The records of the company were lost but were pieced back together by company commanders (from "Indian Wars").

Eleven children were born to this family. They are Batis, Jacob (both deceased by 1882), Mathias, Anne, John, Mary, Peter, Elisabeth, Margaret, Michael and Emma.

Margaret (Maggie) was my grandmother and married to Anton Schmitz. I remember hearing stories, passed on to my aunts and my dad, about how Indians would come to the farm and smell bread baking and they would be given a loaf. Or, maybe they would be given a chicken as a way of peaceful co-existence.

Michael died on June 3, 1901 at home of dropsy. His obituary refers to him as "an old settler". He was buried from the Catholic Church.

Anna died in 1915 at the home of her daughter, Mary (Mrs. Jake Dewanz). Her obituary states that "she was not spared the hardships of the early pioneer days and the trying days of the Indian Massacre, but she never lost courage. She was always hopeful that times would get better and she saw her hopes realized." She was buried from the Holy Trinity Catholic Church in New Ulm.

By: **Marlys (Schmitz) Huss**, grand-daughter of the Arnoldi's, 2007

Recommended Books

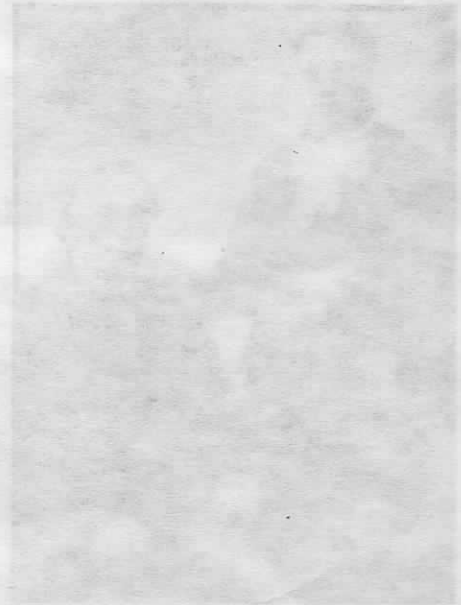
"Rollingstone: A Luxembourgish Village in Minnesota" by Mary E. Niles in 1983.

This 223-page book is a fantastic collection of early life in this village of a few hundred people located about ten miles north of Winona, MN in a wide valley stretching between the Mississippi River bluffs.

She covers a wide array of topics that will be of value to the reader beyond specific Rollingstone stories. These include, life in Luxembourg, emigration and travel, establishing a settlement, and other aspects of early life in the New World. It's great for the serious student of Luxembourg studies, but is wide-ranging enough to please the casual reader, too.

It's available from LACS at www.luxamculturalsociety.org and Fausto Gardini, LACS Board member, at vailcorp@aol.com. It'll be available at the summer conference in Wisconsin, too.

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



Luxembourg Facts and Trivia

- *According to the official weather station at Luxembourg City's Findel Airport, 2007 was the warmest year on record since records-keeping began in 1947. The average temperature was 50.7 F (10.4 C). (F=Fahrenheit and C=Centigrade)
- *Additionally, almost every month set a new record high temperature, with July being the warmest at 99 F (31.5 C).
- *As if that wasn't enough to convince Luxembourgers that the global climate is changing, record rainfall of 99 inches was recorded and the number of sunlight hours was also a record-setter at 1,886 hours beating the previous norm by 238 hours!

Membership Events

- *May 2008 – Visit the Luxies in Rollingstone, MN and see the film on life in Luxembourg.
- *Summer 2008 – Visit to Remsen, Iowa to see the Lux. Heritage Society of N.W. Iowa

LHS Board Meetings

- *April 24
- *May 29
- *June 26