



Luxembourg Heritage Society of Southern Minnesota

NEWSLETTER



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Parading For The Cause

This summer saw plenty of activity as we tried to spread the word both about our specific organization and about Luxembourg heritage in general by being in a few parades. Our unit, when at full compliment, consists of two people carrying the banner with our name (and the banner provider, the August Schell Brewery of New Ulm), one person carrying our Luxembourg flag, and a car pulling the float which is a wooden representation of a section of the Luxembourg City walls. The float was built by LHS-member, Gene Bertrand and LHS-member, Leon Hoffmann provided the trailer.

As we stood in line for the Bavarian Blast parade in New Ulm on July 19th, we got to talking with the Sleepy Eye Royalty float behind us and discussed how someday we might ask some of those ladies to be "royalty" for us. (This idea was to blossom later on in the story.) We received several nice comments from the largely German-descended audience in New Ulm and had one serious request for membership information.

On August 8, at the national Luxembourg Heritage Cultural Conference in Belgium, WI, Ron Schmitz and Terry Sveine participated in the parade by themselves. Their unit consisted of them carrying the banner down a very windy street, while holding the flag over Terry's shoulder. We got a bit of applause for coming from so far away, but people seemed generally bemused as to who we were. It was still fun.



Our last parade of the season was the best. It was for Sleepy Eye's Corn Days on August 22nd and we had our full array of participants and were pleasantly surprised by four young "Luxembourg Princesses" showed up dressed in flouncing white dresses who sat on the back of the unit and tossed out candy. They were Barb and Gene Bertrand's grandchildren. Pretty girls are always an attention-getter and these young ladies proved the point. We did have one curious scenario here, though.

Three different times people yelled from the sidelines asking where we were from. When we replied, "Right here in Sleepy Eye and New Ulm," they seemed confused - as did we. When one caller said, "You guys came a long ways - all the way from St. Cloud," we finally understood that they thought we were from the small town of Luxemburg, MN about 90 miles away. For next year, we'll have to figure out how to present ourselves as being a local group - that they could join!



Luxembourg Emigration Presentation

On Saturday afternoon, June 27, our own LHS-member and Luxembourg native, Olga Carlson, gave a presentation of a movie she owns called, "Luxembourg, U.S.A." It was shown at the Blue Earth County Library in downtown Mankato to a group of 11 of us who all thought it was very well-done.

The movie was filmed by a Luxembourg film crew and consisted of interviews of various people who work with some aspect of their Luxembourg heritage in the states of Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota. While the crew usually asked about the remaining Luxembourg traditions in each area, they also filmed some aspects of modern life in America. The audience for the film was for Luxembourgers, but we Americans found many useful insights in it.

One theme expressed by several of those interviewed was that they felt the Luxembourg heritage would soon disappear in America. This came from some surprising people - people who are leaders of heritage organizations like ours and even a Luxembourg Consul in Illinois. (I have met many of those interviewed and their responses surprised me!)

Our group discussed afterward that we didn't feel the way they did. We felt that while it's no secret that the further one gets from the original immigrants, the less ingrained the traditions may be. However, our new group is a living example of there still being interest. The interviewees also said they lament that the young people aren't picking up the interest that they have. We felt that it is a "stage of life" issue that becomes interesting somewhere around 35-45 years of age for most people.

If that's true, then there will always be a new "crop" of middle-aged people looking to find out about their past. It is up to organizations like ourselves to structure themselves so that we keep on offering something of interest to our groups (like this presentation!) and then the spirit of our ancestors can still live on!

We wish to extend a big thanks to Olga for organizing and operating this event. If anyone has any ideas for future events or learning activities, be sure to tell any Board member. We need activities and new members to continue thriving!



Luxembourgian Saints

Those who study Luxembourg, both modern and ancient, quickly become familiar with the fact that Luxembourg has a long tradition of honoring their favored Catholic saints. It may be surprising to know that several people who "went on to sainthood" lived part of their lives in Luxembourg. Some taught or ministered there and Luxembourg has even produced a few natives who became saints.

Let's clarify what a saint is, as defined by the Catholic Church: it is an honor bestowed on a person who has proven themselves by living an exemplary or holy life. Until the 10th century it was done by popular acclaim and may have even been a local affair not recognized throughout the whole church. To this day, there are over 10,000 persons who are named as being saints, but there is no official and all-encompassing "headcount" of the saints. After the 10th century the Catholic Church developed a formal process called canonization that includes evidence of miracles associated with the saint candidate.

Saints born in Luxembourg, were **St. Peter of Luxembourg** who was a cardinal during the 1300s, and **St. Ausbald** who was active in the 800s (even before an "official Luxembourg" existed from 963 AD.)

Having worked in the land that was to become Luxembourg were **St. Monon** and **St. Remaclus** in the 600s. **St. Corbican** and **St. Willihad** also worked there in the 700s, as did **St. Theobald** in the 1000s.

Among the most well-known of the saints associated with Luxembourg is **St. Willibrord** who moved to the eastern border town of Echernacht. He worked there in the 700s and is buried there and is still honored today....>

Perhaps the most famous of Luxembourg's saints is **Saint Cunigunde** (in a variety of spellings). She was not only a semi-major saint, but she was married to a saint - St. Henry II! Additionally, she is the daughter of the founder of Luxembourg, Count Siegfried and so plays a major role in the Luxembourg church....>

Additionally, there are a few saints who are of major importance to Luxembourg. **St. Donatus** is the protector from storm and lightning damage and is highly honored today, and was important to many immigrants to the U.S.A. in the later 1800s. Notably, there is a charming Luxembourg village south of Dubuque, Iowa named after him. **St. Nicholas**, from whom Santa Claus derives, is also highly honored in Luxembourg with special activities during his holy day.

Finally, Mary, Jesus' mother, is the Patroness of the Duchy of Luxembourg in the special form of, "**Our Lady, Comforter of the Afflicted.**"



Ancestral Research

(Submitted by LHS Board member, Steve Vescelus)

On another recent visit to the German-Bohemian Heritage Society's Research Library in New Ulm, MN, a person asked me, "Are you looking for more relatives?"

My thought on that is:

There would be no need for a research library or a "Heritage Society" if like-minded individuals didn't share an interest in searching for the unknown relative ancestor.

I have found during years of researching my ancestral lineages, many people share certain characteristics and/or mannerisms of their bloodline ancestors. Inherent traits manifest themselves in newfound cousins and this enforces the adage that "blood is thicker than water" no matter how thick or thin the line.

If you were an 8th or 9th cousin for instance, you might say, that was my 10th Great Grandfather and your 10th Great Grandfather." His sons and daughters were brothers and sisters to each other. Their children were cousins.

In a small community, cousins knew cousins, even to the 3rd or 4th cousin by name and it may not have been unusual to have met 5th, 6th or further cousins at family reunions. But when those relatives relocated to a different country or area, the memory of their shared ancestors was forgotten.

What a delight to find a 'new' cousin and blood lines from obscurity to present times. Bonds renewed, stories shared.

I hope those who are seeking, find who they are looking for and the town their ancestors were from. But more importantly, to know where their own eternal souls will be. After all, "Time is relative."

30 Luxembourgers in Our Backyard!

True to plan, Rene Daubenfeld arrived in southern Minnesota with 30 friends from Luxembourg. On August 31 they enjoyed a city tour of New Ulm and then an American-style picnic with food and drink and concertina music by LHS-member Gene Bertrand. This was hosted by many LHS members at Terry and Ellie Sveine's backyard. New Ulm's Mayor, Joel Albrecht, came and did a lovely welcome ceremony as shown in the photo (Rene, Joel, Ron Schmitz, Steve Vescelus.) A small exchange of gifts was done between some of the attendees along with much pleasant conversation. The evening ended about 9:30pm and a lovely time was had by all - with the only drawback being the season's first arrival of mosquitoes! (Our guests are not used to these pests, at least to the degree that we have them.)

The next day they continued on their journey to Sleepy Eye where they were entertained at Gene's "Fest Keller" with refreshments and live music. They then toured St. Mary's Church, a city tour, and a visit to the Schoenstatt Shrine where they ate lunch before heading to Jackpot Junction Casino.

We look forward to more visits from our friends from "the old country" and hope to see some of them again.



Luxembourg Heritage Weekend Re-lived

On Thursday, August 6th, right after my work, I was met at my home by fellow LHS member, Ron Schmitz in his fuel-efficient, and surprisingly spacious, Prius car for the seven-hour ride to Belgium, Wisconsin to attend the Luxembourg Heritage Weekend there.

We broke up the ride with a hamburger-and-beer stop in eastern Wisconsin and arrived at our hotel at midnight. We went right to bed since it was to be an early and long day tomorrow.

Nearby Sheboygan was our destination, and the Accuity Insurance and Conference Center the location. The day-long event was great - as the past two I attended also proved to be. This year focused more on modern Luxembourg than in years past, but I was not disappointed.

Famed Luxembourg native and scholar, Jean Ensch, gave a brief history of Luxembourg-American relations that was very informative. Jean is a wealth of information - I wish he lived here!

A highlight of the morning was a screening of the new movie, "Charlotte: A Royal at War." It showed how Duchess Charlotte struggled to deal with her role within her country after the Nazis invaded in 1940. She chose to leave for England to be a source of inspiration to her countrymen from afar. She was criticized for leaving, but she wisely felt that she would have been captured and stifled, or worse, made to be a Nazi mouth-piece had she stayed. It was a very-well done movie and I learned a lot from the commentary afterward by some of the scholars in attendance.

After lunch we had a panel of four men who relayed their experiences from World War II. They were men from America and Luxembourg and Joe Demler's account of his capture and being reduced to weighing 76 pounds was very moving. A standing ovation was given to these men and they deserved it!

Jean Ensch gave an interesting talk about the new law that allows dual citizenship which speaks of the new desire for more Luxembourgish citizens in an expanding European Union (EU), but also allows some to regain their past citizenship (such as our friend and member, Olga Carlson - who was in attendance with a friend!)

Finally, a presentation by Erna Hennicot-Schoepges spoke of modern Luxembourg's role in maintaining their status among the Europe and the world. She carries great credentials as a member of the EU and various other governmental roles. She has great hopes for the future and is moved by the relative peace that exists in Europe.

That evening Ron and I stopped by the Cultural Center for a quick glimpse, but were surprised by the set-up for reception that evening that I hoped we could have attended. Disappointed we could not be there because it was an "invitation only" gathering, we retired to a local pub afterward where we made several friends and then crossed the street to Curley's Restaurant for a nice meal and an evening of making new friends, including the likeable "Kenny" from our Regency Inn hotel.

The new morning was spent at the Grand Opening ceremonies of the Luxembourg Cultural Center and our organization was privileged to be acknowledged to the couple hundred people in attendance.

Hating the sun as I do, I found a spot to stand during the ceremony just under the tent and lo and behold, I was seven feet away from the visiting Grand Duke Henri and his two sons! We are the same age and I marvel at how different our lives are. (Henri is on the bottom left looking toward the right.)



After a brief walk-through of the wonderful center, we found our paver-stones in the back garden area proudly proclaiming our group as a sponsor along with the local Bertrand and Hoffmann families. By 1:30pm Ron and I left the site to line up for the parade. We were obviously a small unit, but we held our own. I think we caused more confusion than recognition. We cooled off at the park and listened to music before cleaning up for the fancy banquet that evening.



The "Green Heart Gala Dinner and Auction" is always nice. It was at the deluxe Mequon Country Club, about 15 miles south and we gathered with about 200 others to bid on auction items as a fundraiser (I won a bottle of peach liquer called "Mirabel" and Ron a lovely print of Vianden Castle).

In addition to the fine food, we were entertained by the "Luxembourg Fun Brass Band" and are considering hosting them in New Ulm for Bavarian Blast next year (We'll see how well that is received.)



We made new friends and visited with old ones, especially the folks from the St. Donatus and LaCrosse Luxembourg Societies. This event breeds friendships and a sense of belonging to something special – which we do!

The ride home was uneventful, although I have always found Wisconsin to be a pretty state to visit. Please consider attending next year. I guarantee that you will not be disappointed. It was great!

Our Organization's Challenges

After two and half years in existence, our group has some challenges that we are asking your help with. I will list them below and hope to hear from you with ideas for resolution and improvement.

Membership: Counting spouses, inactive members and even a few who didn't pay dues this year, we have 56 members. I know we should be stricter on getting everyone to pay, but since we're so new, I am hesitant to drop anyone right away in the hope that they'll come around next year. This number is O.K. but we hope to grow bigger - which will enable us to do more and involve more people and areas.

Money: We are always low on cash. With payments for printing and mailing the Newsletter, float costs, and space rentals for events, etc., we are perennially low. Maybe we will be a group that is always on the edge of "no money," which isn't necessarily bad, but it does limit what we can do. Increased membership is the key to alleviating this. You can help by asking your friends and relatives to join us.

Newsletter: I put an e-mailed plea out to members to ask for help with printing *this* Newsletter. Some people suggested that we make it an e-mailed Newsletter, like some members said they get from other organizations. This has been, and will continue to be, discussed by the Board, but we agreed early on that a tangible, paper copy is what we wanted. Also, only about half of our members have e-mail so we still need to produce a hard copy. Hard copy Newsletters have also been used to solicit membership and the Newsletter has been cited as the biggest advantage to joining. For the immediate future we will probably continue printing 3-4 per year.

Note: A special thanks ("merci") to LHS members, *Kevin Wester* and *Mary Ann Zins*, for contributing a combined \$85 to allow this Newsletter to be produced. Good job!

Board Composition: No, this is not about some 'construction concerns' (haha), it refers to our efforts to rewrite some of our Bylaws. At the last Annual Meeting we only had 1 new person run for the 7-member Board. As it's written now, we will have 6 members going off the Board next year with that 1 new person remaining!

We *will* figure out how to deal with this, but are concerned that we don't create an organization dominated by the same people for too long. This is a plea to consider being involved for the next year. It truly is not hard, but does require attending meetings (right now - monthly, but it may be reduced.) "Step up" and we can do it.

The good news is - that we exist and are healthy! We do put on events (food tasting, movie screenings, Annual Meeting, socializing, etc.), produce an informative and educational Newsletter, have created a fledgling library of materials (ask me), and are getting recognition around the area.

I am asking for your help. Remember the nature of our restrictions, such as our location, our funds and our manpower, but am asking all of you what you'd like to see different and better. Let us know and we'll do our best to improve YOUR group. I see no reason to think that we won't continue on for a good long time! ... Terry

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Fun Facts and Recent Observations on Luxembourg

- *Luxembourg has a dozen soccer teams that compete in official FIFA leagues. Sadly, they have never advanced too far. **Bicycling is their forte**, however, and the Grand Duchy has won the Tour de France four times with several good showings in recent years.
- *Our Luxembourg-born friend, Fausto Gardini, has just published a book called "**Storms Over Luxembourg**" about World War I in that country. Look at www.luxembourgensia.com for more info about this "e-book." This means it will only be available through electronic format and not in traditional print. This is a growing method to publish cheaply, so get on board!
- *Luxembourg Foreign Defense Minister, Jean-Marie Halsdorf, visited Kosovo to check on the status of the **23 Luxembourgish troops** stationed there as part of the EUROFOR agreement to provide internal security for this recovering country.
- *There are nine candidates for the "**Miss Luxembourg 2010**" contest that will happen in December. The winner will go onto the Miss World contest. An official was quoted as saying "...we try to go beyond the stereotype and show that these girls have charm, elegance and charisma..."
- *The Muslim observation of Ramadan is now ending and this event was used to point out that **Luxembourg now has about 9,000 Muslims**, the majority originating from the Balkan lands. They have 5 mosques that are located in Wiltz, Mamer, Bonnevoie, Esch sur Alzette, Niederkorn and a 6th one opening soon in Lux City. Who knew?!