

The Luxembourg Heritage Society of Northwest Iowa will hold its annual meeting Saturday,

May 4, at 9:30 a.m. in the meeting room of the Remsen Public Library. Special note will be taken of the death of Grand Duke Jean, who died April 23, 2019 at the age of 98. The Grand Duke's funeral will take place on the day of the Luxembourg Heritage Society's meeting.

The history of the country of Luxembourg begins in 963 A.D., when Count Siegfried I acquired a rocky promontory and its Roman-era fortifications known as *Lucilinburhuc*, 'little castle', and the surrounding area from a nearby abbey.

Over the next thousand years, many customs evolved. One unique Luxembourgish tradition that has survived for hundreds of years is the "hopping procession" that takes place each year in the town of Echternach on the Tuesday following Pentecost. The event was placed on the UNESCO List of Intangible Heritage in 2010.

Echternach, the oldest town in Luxembourg, was chartered in the year 1236. With a population of about 5,600, it is located in the eastern part of the country near the German border. One of the main tourist attractions is the Benedictine abbey founded by St. Willibrord when he arrived in Echternach in A.D. 698.

Sometime after Willibrord's death in the eighth century, pilgrims began arriving at his burial site to celebrate a series of miracles which occurred there. By the 1500s, male pilgrims began performing a hopping dance on their way to Willibrord's tomb. By the end of the 18th century, women were also allowed to participate.

The procession serves as an expression of joy inspired by the love of God; the dance itself consists of a hopping step sideways and forward. A YouTube video entitled "Dancing Procession of Echternach" shows some of the more than 9,000 pilgrims who arrive annually,

dressed in white and black bobbing through the streets of the town.

This year, the hopping procession will take place Tuesday, June 11, 2019.

Agenda items for the Luxembourg Heritage Society's meeting on May 4 include the election of officers, a review of the Society's history since its founding in April 2005, and discussion of the sesquicentennial celebration of Luxembourg immigrants' arrival in the Alton, IA area in May, 1870. Anyone interested in Luxembourg or its traditions is welcome to attend.