

Luxembourg Holidays

The holiday season in Luxembourg traditionally begins with the celebration of St. Nicolas Day, when de Kleeschen (St. Nicholas) brings small toys and sweets to children. De Kleeschen leaves the gifts in shoes or slippers that the children leave out overnight.

The saint, dressed in red and white robes with a bishop's mitre or hat on his head and a bishop's crook in his hand, is accompanied by Houseker (Black Peter). Houseker is dressed all in black and carries a whip and a bag. The bag contains twigs that naughty children will receive instead of the traditional gifts.

The legend of St. Nicholas tells of 3 young children who were working in the fields in France. They became lost, and went to the home of a butcher asking for help. Instead of helping, the butcher killed the 3, cut their bodies into small pieces, and placed the pieces in his salting room. When St. Nicholas passed by on his donkey, he realized what was happening, and knocked on the butcher's door. When the butcher saw the saint, he confessed what he had done, and St. Nicholas restored the children to life. Ever since then, de Kleeschen has been the patron saint of children. His companion, Houseker, symbolizes the evil butcher.

The Luxembourg Heritage Society is celebrating the holiday season by placing a Christmas tree at the Pioneer Village Festival of Trees at the Le Mars fairgrounds, and by displaying nativity scenes of secretary Jean Nilles and president Judy Stokesberry at the Plymouth County Historical Museum's nativity display.

The Festival of Trees takes place at the Plymouth County Fairgrounds the weekends of December 4-5 and Dec. 11-12 from 5:30-8:30 pm each evening. The Fairgrounds are located at 500 4th Ave. NE in Le Mars.

The Plymouth County Historical Museum, located at 335 1st Ave. SW, hosts a display of hundreds of nativity scenes in its Study Hall from the beginning of December until Epiphany. The Museum is open Tues. through Sunday from 1:00-5:00 pm.

Both the Festival of Trees and the nativity display are free and open to the public.

The Christmas meeting of the Luxembourg Heritage Society will take place Saturday, December 11 at 9:30 am in the meeting room of the Remsen Public Library, 211 Fulton St., Remsen.

At the Luxembourg Heritage Society's Dec. 11 meeting, topics of discussion will include additional ways the Society can promote celebration of Luxembourg festivals, programs for the coming year, and the possibility of a trip to St. Donatus and other Luxembourg sites in eastern Iowa. Refreshments will be served.

The meeting is open to the public, and everyone, whether of Luxembourg descent or not, is welcome.