

The Luxembourg Heritage Society of Northwest Iowa will hold its monthly meeting Saturday, December 14, 2019 at 9:30 a.m. in the Remsen Public Library meeting room. Discussion topics will include the visit of the Luxembourg ambassador to the United States, His Excellency Ambassador Gaston Stronck who will join us at the Lux Fest celebration.

Lux Fest, to be held in Alton, Iowa June 6-7, 2020, will be a celebration of the arrival of the first Luxembourg settlers in Northwest Iowa in 1870 and all Luxembourg families who came to this part of the country. One of the features will be family genealogies and stories of the settlers.

One of these settlers, Karl Charles Dominic Hoffman (later known as C.D.), early Le Mars pioneer, challenged the usual immigrant story and used the most up-to-date means of transport to move himself and his family to northwest Iowa.

Hoffman, a native of Luxembourg, decided to settle on newly opened land near the present Le Mars. Along with a group of other Luxembourgers, he had been living near St. Donatus, Iowa, a village south of Dubuque. When Peter Gehlen proposed a move to Plymouth County, a troop of 40 settlers from the St. Donatus area made the trip across Iowa in ox carts, arriving in May, 1870.

The group, along with Hoffman, made the decision to move in spite of the objections of their parish priest, Father J. Michael Flammang, who warned "It would be better to throw the children into the Mississippi," because they would all lose their faith if they moved.

Ignoring the priest's advice and feeling the trip would be too difficult for his family, Hoffman took advantage of the newly built railroad. The family of nine boarded the train in Dubuque and rode as far as Des Moines., then transferred to another train for Sioux City. After staying overnight in Sioux City, they boarded a train for Hinton, the end of the line at that time. From that terminus, Hoffman obtained wagons for the final leg of the trip to America township. The family homesteaded a farm about 5 miles from the present town of Le Mars.

In addition to farming, Hoffman built the Dubuque House, a hotel in downtown Le Mars, and also constructed one of the first brick houses in town. Bricks were ordered from Dubuque and the home was completed in 1880.

Hoffman became a leader in the community, filling, at various times, the position of Overseer of the Poor and membership on the Public School Board. He was continuously re-elected to the Board of Plymouth County Supervisors. He was an officer of the Plymouth County Bank (later renamed First National Bank). In 1883, he served as County Treasurer.

The History of Plymouth County describes him as a "staunch Catholic [who] helped found and build St. Joseph's Parish". Hoffman was one of 7 who signed a letter to the Bishop of Dubuque requesting a full time priest who spoke both English and German be assigned to the new parish. The request was granted, and a church and school (now named after Hoffman's friend Peter Gehlen) were constructed.

Hoffman was born in Hovelange, Luxembourg on February 27, 1827 and worked in Paris and Lyons, France as a carpenter and cabinet maker. At the age of 27, he emigrated to America with his parents, half sister and siblings. In 1855 he married Elizabeth Dondelinger, also a native of Luxembourg, and they settled in a log cabin to farm near St. Donatus. Ten children were born to this family. The pioneer died in Le Mars on April 27, 1911 and is buried in Calvary Cemetery, Le Mars.

Descendants of C.D. Hoffman still live in Le Mars.

Everyone is invited to the Heritage Society meeting to assist in planning Lux Fest.