

More than 70,000 Luxembourgers immigrated to the U.S. from colonial times to the present. The first Luxembourger to arrive was Philip de la Noye, who came to New Amsterdam (New York City) on the ship *Fortune*, a sister ship to the *Mayflower*, in 1630.

Except for a few Luxembourger missionaries who worked in New Orleans, in 1838 John B. Noel became the first Luxembourger to cross the Mississippi River. He settled south of Dubuque, IA, in an area which grew to be the village of St. Donatus.

A poor, rural country, Luxembourg offered few opportunities for advancement. There was little industry, and the main way to earn a living was by farming. During the 1840s, advances in medicine reduced infant mortality, leading to overpopulation. Larger numbers of surviving children resulted in farms being divided into smaller portions. In addition, poor harvests caused widespread hunger. Since travel was becoming easier and word had reached Luxembourg of the availability of cheap land in the U.S., complete families and sometimes entire villages left the country in search of a better life.

Some of these Luxembourgers followed Noel to St. Donatus , and eventually the small valley filled up. One of the original settlers, Peter Gehlen, moved west to the area that is now LeMars. He encouraged others in St. Donatus to travel to western Iowa, where there were still tracts of unsettled land.

In 1870, a group of 40 settlers set out from St. Donatus and arrived in the Alton area May 19. The group established homesteads and raised their families, continuing many of their traditions.

The Luxembourg Heritage Society of Northwest Iowa is planning a sesquicentennial celebration June 6-7, 2020 of the arrival of Luxembourgers in this area. The Society will meet at 9:30 a.m on Saturday, June 8 to continue planning the festival. The group will gather in the

meeting room of the Remsen Public Library. Anyone interested in Luxembourg immigration or in helping plan the celebration is encouraged to attend.