

JULIEN'S JOURNAL

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GIVE A GIFT
SUBSCRIPTION

Voices of
Christmas

3rd Grade
Letters:
Christmas
Traditions

TOYS FOR TOTS





Pictured at the Rolls-Royce Museum (l-r): Mayor Wolfgang Rummele, Nancy Rhomberg, Sue Rhomberg, Dick Landis, Deb Buol, Zo Landis, Mayor Roy Buol, Tim Horsfield, Kevin Firnstahl.



Gift Exchange

A Tale of Two Sister Cities

by Susan L. Lemon

In October, Dubuque sent ten delegates, led by Mayor Buol, to Dornbirn, Austria to officially recognize Dubuque and Dornbirn as Sister Cities.

Like visiting ghosts in a riveting chapter of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, reflections of the past have stirred visions of the future for two communities separated geographically by over 4,500 miles. Dubuque, nestled on the banks of the Mississippi River, and the thriving community of Dornbirn, Austria, near the Rhine River, share the prospects of a better tomorrow after having been declared (by proclamation) Sister Cities.

About thirty years ago, the Dubuque City Council discussed the development of a Sister City Commission (see www.sister-cities.org). Since that time, a charge of approximately eleven community members and two council representatives have promoted the designation of a total of three official international relationships. Initially, Dubuque established "familial" ties with Pyatigorsk in Russia and Handan in the Hebei Province of China. Unfortunately, due to budget restraints and political unrest, time passed without significant engagement.

But in May of 2010, the Sister City spirit was restored when a delegation of officials from the Austrian city of Dornbirn, traveled to the United States. The Mayor of Dornbirn, Wolfgang Rummele and his daughter Caroline; the vice-mayor, Martin Ruepp and his wife, Carmen; the public relations director, and Ralf Hammerle and his assistant, Eva Thurnher, traveled to America to visit Drexel University in Philadelphia.

Drexel University was founded by Anthony

J. Drexel, the son and heir of the fortunes of Francis Martin Drexel, an Austrian immigrant, entrepreneur and banker. After exploring sites of historical significance in the eastern United States, the curious adventurers were drawn westward, not unlike the Dornbirn immigrants of the early 1800s.

In 1834, Austrian stonemason Franz Sailer ventured into the new world and took up residence where the Mississippi and Missouri rivers converged. Many former Dornbirn citizens followed his lead and traveled through this area to settle in St. Louis, or moved on to Chicago, Davenport and Dubuque. From 1850 onward, Dubuque became one of the fastest growing cities west of the Mississippi. It was a favorite destination – this city of bridges, craftsmen, traders and farmers. This meant opportunity and work for the newcomers. Johann Georg Rhomberg, a former Dornbirn resident, wrote home in 1864, "In the first nine years, I took on jobs as a gardener, laborer, canal boatman, hatmaker, hunter, lumberjack, painter and soldier." Like the character, Bob Cratchett, in the beloved tale, A Christmas Carol, Johann was a hard worker. Dubuque would not be what it is today without the courage and ambition of the Dornbirn pioneer immigrants.

Why did Dubuque attract the Dornbirners? Perhaps it was the meandering flow of the Mississippi River that reminded the Austrian adventurers of their beloved homeland and the upper Rhine River threading through Zurich (only an hour



Sister Cities International
Sister Cities International (SCI) was founded by President Dwight D. Eisenhower and the network encompasses tens of thousands of citizens. SCI programs have been established in 136 countries on 6 continents. A city may have an unlimited number of sister cities.



Nancy Rhomberg, Sue Rhomberg and Ellen Rhomberg Griffin, Jacob Rhomberg's great-great-granddaughters, outside Jacob's house in Dornbirn. Floor plans of the house are on file in the Dornbirn City Archives and dated in the 1860's. Jacob Rhomberg's son, Franz Martin, is Jim Rhomberg's great grandfather. Franz came to the U.S. in the late 1880's, settled in Dubuque, and then started Rhomberg Brothers Bottling Co. and Rhomberg Fur Co.

west). The scenic landscape, a comparable climate and the sure ascent of new business ventures certainly posed an appeal. — Dornbirn PORTRAIT 2, From Dornbirn to the New World.

Another goal of the Dornbirn delegation in May 2010 was to explore eastern Iowa where numerous Austrian settlers, many of the name "Rhomberg," had planted family trees. The 2010 group came to Dubuque to make connections with the past and the present. Kevin Firnstahl, Dubuque City Clerk commented, in reference to the Austrians of Dornbirn, "They deal with the same day-to-day business that we do. They want the good life. They believe government must run for the betterment of society."

Because of the 2010 visit to the U.S., a new affiliation was birthed with far-reaching promise. Upon their arrival in the Midwest, the European travelers learned of Dubuque, past and present, under the primary tutorage of Kevin Firnstahl, a history-buff and staff liaison to the Sister City Commission. So, both European guests and American hosts began "watching, sharing and comparing," enthralled to discover a unique camaraderie which



Mayors Rummele and Buol signing the official proclamations in German and English.

comes naturally with the assessment of the similarities and dissimilarities of life.

In April of 2011, Meinrad Pichler, a Dornbirn author and historian, visited Dubuque. The hospitality and warmth of our river city has generated a spirit of reciprocation and friendship which inspired the creation and publication of a book entitled, *Dornbirn PORTRAIT 2, From Dornbirn to the New World*. Pichler shares insights and reasons why Austrian pioneers journeyed to America. He states, "As a rule, migrations take place when there is hope for better opportunities and advancement in some place other than one's homeland. Hopes engendered by word-of-mouth reports,

The Gift Exchange:

Long-term understanding and respect.

Dubuque leaders were asked to place an exhibit at the International Sustainability Exposition as a result of SCI relationship in Handan, China.

The Dubuque City Flag in blue, green and gold, proudly hangs in Sister City Dornbirn, Austria's Town Hall.

The Dubuque "Art on the River" innovation project was planted in Sister City Dornbirn, Austria.

A Russian landscape architect from Sister City, Pyatigorsk, Russia, designed "Pyatigorsk Park," at 16th and Kerper Boulevard, overlooking the Peosta Channel.

Three children's books and a video were placed in the Multicultural Family Center in Dubuque focusing on the 13th World Gymnastics of Dornbirn in 2007.



Dubuque City Clerk Kevin Firnstahl, Mayor Wolfgang Rummele of Dornbirn, Mayor Roy Buol of Dubuque and Dubuque Sister City Commission Chairperson Dick Landis.



Above: The Roteshaus (Red House), the oldest inn of Dornbirn and site of the formal dinner.

Left: The building in the background is the City Hall in Lindau, Germany.

Back row (l-r): Nancy Rhomberg, Michael Griffin (Ellen's husband), Kevin Firnstahl, Tim Horsefield, Zo Landis, Dick Landis, Sue Rhomberg, and Eva Thurnher (one of our hosts).

Front row (l-r): is Ellen Rhomberg Griffin, Deb and Roy Buol.



Pictured above while visiting Cable Car Terrace: Kevin Firnstahl, Tim Horsfield, Sue Rhomberg, Ralf Hammerle (Dornbirn Public Relations Director), Martin Ruepp (Dornbirn Vice Mayor), Carmen Ruepp (Martin's wife), Nancy Rhomberg, Mayor Roy Buol, Deb Buol, Eva Thurnher (Dornbirn Public Relations Assistant), Zo Landis and Dick Landis.

cunning emigration solicitors and letters, or even transfers of money from those who have already emigrated, increase the readiness to take risks, while concealing the possible hazards."

In October 2012, the Sister City structure was officially instated through Sister Cities International (SCI) by a delegation of ten Dubuque travelers that visited Dornbirn, the largest city in the Austrian state of Vorarlberg. The purpose of SCI is "to advance peace and prosperity through cultural, educational, humanitarian and economic development efforts and serves

as a hub for institutional knowledge and best practices to benefit citizen diplomats." A formal ceremony took place in Dornbirn where Dubuque Mayor Roy Buol and Dornbirn Mayor Wolfgang Rummele signed identical documents in

both German and English. The union was celebrated with music and festivity.

The delegation from Dubuque was led by city stars, Mayor Roy Buol, Clerk Kevin Firnstahl and Sister City Commission member Dick Landis. They learned about

Common Ground - Dornbirn (Austria) and Dubuque, IA (USA):

Similar Climate

Population: 55,000 to 60,000 inhabitants

Economic Emphasis: Tourism and Agriculture

History of Textile and Millwork Industries

Higher Education:

- Dubuque Schools – NICC, Clarke University, Loras College, University of Dubuque, Wartburg Seminary, Emmaus Bible College

• Dornbirn Schools - Fachhochschule Vorarlberg University of Applied Sciences

Sports Initiatives:

- Dubuque Hockey – Home of the Dubuque Fighting Saints, Dubuque Youth Hockey Association

• Dornbirn – RHC, Hosted 2010 Rink Hockey Men's B World Championships

Special Interests: Sustainability, Energy, Recycling

Cultural Thrust: Fine Arts

Cable Cars: Dubuque's Fourth Street Elevator Co., Dornbirn's Karren Cable Car

advancing technology, traditional government, cultural mores and much more. These connections have encouraged new liaisons of international understanding. The goal was to plant as well as glean innovation and inspiration. The endeavor was successful.

Today, the cities of Dornbirn and Dubuque reflect quite similar images. They maintain a vital, local marketplace with thriving tourism. Dornbirn and Dubuque both stress the importance of education and academic advancement, with well-known universities. Ice hockey (in Austria, called "rink hockey") is popular in both Dubuque and Dornbirn. Textile and millwork industries have held a noteworthy role in the economic development of both cities. Interests in the arts also tie the two cities together with common bonds.

Although "relations are embryonic," Kevin Firnstahl is confident that the Dubuque travelers have brought home valuable and practical information about the Dornbirn culture, the city operations, the archives (much older than the Dubuque records) and how their council functions under the parliamentary system.

Because "the arts mean business," Kevin explains, "fresh cultural understanding will give the commission tangible things to work on" relating to the arts.

The Jim Rhomberg family of Dubuque, among others, are the direct modern-day descendants of a sizable group of 1800s immigrants from Dornbirn.

Early ancestors established The Rhomberg Brothers Bottling Company. The success of this undertaking prompted the creation of The Dubuque Tanning and Robe Company. Although the name has changed, the fourth generation family-run business known as Rhomberg Fur Company carries on the traditions of excellent service that have made the business successful over the past decades.

Jim's wife Nancy was able to tour the home of her husband's great-great grandfather Jacob Rhomberg while in Dornbirn in October.

These Dubuque travelers from afar have recently returned from the east... just in the nick of time. With rich stories to warm the holidays, it is universally evident that the best gifts are those of respect and understanding.

From Dubuque to our friends in Dornbirn, "A merry Christmas and may God bless us, everyone!" ❖

"When they saw the *star*,
they *rejoiced* with
exceeding *great joy*."

— MATTHEW 2:10



Joanne M. Burrows, SC, Ph.D.
and the Clarke community
wish you the blessings of Christmas

We Remember Christmas

Twenty Classic Christmas favorites with guest star Peter Oprisko, America's acclaimed pop standards sensation!





Directed by Paul Hemmer



Peter Oprisko

Winter Wonderland, I'll Be Home For Christmas, Silver Bells, Let It Snow, White Christmas and many more!

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