

3 Oktoberfest '22

The 3 October Festival celebrates the liberation of Leiden from the Spaniards in 1574. The city becomes an enormous street party, starting with a public meal of "hutspot" stew, herring and white bread, and followed by three days of parades, a street market, circus rides, magicians, choirs, pole-vaulting over the canals and so much more. My favorite part of the festival is the 3 October Parade, which this year honored the role that Leiden has played in the development of science. Leiden is the European City of Science for 2022, has one of Europe's oldest Universities and Observatories, and the city has historically been home to a number of important scientific discoveries. The 3 October festival has been a local tradition in Leiden since 1886 but had to be cancelled the last two years due to the COVID pandemic. This year it was back, in full bloom, and people came from far-and-near to celebrate together with the people of Leiden.

So, how did all this all come about? Between 1568 and 1648, Holland was occupied by the Spaniards, under the leadership of King Philip II. While Leiden had initially been loyal to the Spanish king, once restrictions were placed on religious freedom, the population's loyalties switched to William of Orange, who fought with his troops (the "Geuzen" or water beggers) to try and drive the Spaniards out. After the head of the Spanish crown in Holland, the Duke of Alva, failed to capture Alkmaar, he set his sights on Leiden, and in 1573, Spanish troops surrounded the city. For four months, they sealed off the city, and tried to starve the inhabitants to death. By August of 1573, many people were starving in the city, and the mood turned ugly. Mayor van der Werf was able to convince the residents to be patient, and even offered them his own body if there was nothing else left in the city to eat. Finally, on September 29, 1574, contact was restored with William of Orange and his troops promised to liberate they city. They planned to pierce the dikes holding back the water from Leiden, flood the city, and, in so doing, to drive the Spaniards out. This they did, and the weakened city wall collapsed on the night of October 2,1574. The Spaniards fled the city in panic, and one of the Spaniards was in such a hurry that he left behind a pot of stew (hutspot) made of carrots, onions, meat and parsnip, on an open fire. The next morning, the Geuzen entered the city, bringing herring and white bread for the starving residents. Hence, to celebrate the liberation of Leiden, the 3 October society cooks a meal of Hutspot and hands out herring and white bread to every resident of Leiden.

The relief of Leiden was an important milestone in the struggle against the Spaniards to become an independent republic. Leiden's rebellion turned out to be the beginning of the retreat of the Spaniards from Holland. Not long afterwards, the Republic of the Netherlands came into being. 'Leiden relieved, Holland saved' become a historical slogan. Moreover, as a thank you for the efforts and courage of the people of Leiden, William of Orange donated a university to the people of Leiden, which was inaugurated on 8 February 1575, four months after the Relief of Leiden.











































































































































































































































