

"Family stories in the countryside" - exploring family history and life stories

It is important to be aware of your family history in order to better understand events in the present. By studying family life stories, it is possible to get to know the people of your family, the joyful and miserable events in their lives and the times in which they lived. Researching one's own family gives one a greater interest and understanding of the history of the neighbourhood, Latvia and the world.

Content of the description

1. Project "Family stories in the countryside".
2. Lecture on conducting interviews, taking notes and oral history.
3. Recruitment of project participants via posters, social networks, emails, local newspaper.
4. Project participants meet once a month, on Thursdays at 16:00, for three consecutive months.
5. Independent work Study of photographs and documents of your family and place in the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries.
6. Interviews and conversations with people, close and distant relatives.
7. Work in the National Library of Latvia's digital archive www.periodika.lv and other resources.
8. Typing, scanning photos and documents.
9. Printing of the prepared material.
10. Binding of the prepared material.
11. The project leader and participants publish information about the project in the local monthly newspaper Jaunpils vēstis and on facebook.com.
12. Project closing event.

1. The project "Family Stories in the Countryside" is prepared to purchase the necessary materials for the project:

- training for project participants
- Sheets;
- ink for the printer;
- binding machine;
- binding spirals;
- etc. decorative materials

2. Attracting project participants



3. Lecture on conducting interviews, recording and oral history Latvian Oral History Researchers Association, University of Latvia

- open to all;
- oral history: conducting, collecting and publishing interviews;
- method, meaning, application;
- interview, salt by salt;
- introducing the national oral history collection;
- part of the lecture is available on youtube.com, Jaunpils RAC Rats.



4. Monthly meetings of project participants (up to 10 participants)

- The first meeting is open to all interested parties;
- The second meeting also includes new members;
- each participant tells a story about themselves;
- your experience in family research;
- what is currently being done in family research;
- how things have worked out in the past and what difficulties have been encountered;
- make recommendations to others

5. Independent work Study of photographs and documents of your family and place 19; 20; 21 c.

- study of photographs and documents
- consulting other family members about photos and documents;
- if the year, place and people in the photograph are not specified, try to clarify the information (look at the back of the photograph, search the internet for additional information about the photographer by initials, surname).

6. Conducting interviews

- Identifying the oldest family member;
- interviews and conversations with people, close and distant relatives;
- as part of the training, project participants conduct interviews with family and relatives using a dictaphone or video (audio recording makes it much easier for the interviewee to work and transcribe the story);
- handwritten notes of the interview.

7. Search the National Library of Latvia's digital archive www.periodika.lv and other resources.

- Examining old newspapers for information using:
 - ✓ people's names;
 - ✓ surnames;
 - ✓ house names;
 - ✓ places of residence;
 - ✓ names of parishes, counties, districts;
 - ✓ years;
 - ✓ events.

8. Processing and digitising information

- typing the text of the interviews;
- scanning photos and documents
- processing text, photos and other materials in MS Word or Google.com gmail, google doc. , or elsewhere;
- printing of the prepared material.

9. Printing the prepared material

- check that the text and pictures are well spread over the pages;
- the picture is not split over two pages;
- checking that only the title remains on the page, etc;
- check for grammatical and typographical errors when rereading material;
- print using the resources available to them, or on the premises of the association, within the limits of the project funds.



10. Binding the prepared material

- works are bound in metal spirals

11. Project publicity

- project participants are reached via posters, social networks, emails and local newspapers.
 - ✓ starting the project
 - ✓ during the project
 - ✓ at the end of the project
- project participants who agreed were filmed talking about their experiences of doing family research. The videos are posted on youtube.com, Jaunpils RAC RATS; facebook.com/JaunpilsRATS
- posters can be created via www.canva.com

12. Project risks

- people do not film or give audio interviews. They believe that nothing interesting has happened in their lives. Option to write their life story on computer or in handwriting.

13. Self-written life story

- Encouraged by the project, the elderly woman Marite Kergalve from Jurgi, Jaunpils parish wrote her life story in her own handwriting, on 96 pages, during the winter

month of January. She wrote it each day. The life story includes the period 1946-2021, set in the villages and towns of the surrounding area;

- The life story, written in a notebook, was transcribed into computer and bound in a spiral (in addition selected photos to accompany the text and viewed National Library of Latvia digital archive periodika.lv).
- Short part from the biography as an sample:

The Biography

"I, Mārīte Kergalve, was born on 27 May 1946 in Viesatu, Tukums district in the village "Vārpās". We were a family of six children: brothers Armands Osvalds, sisters Ruta, Skaidrīte and Mudrīte. Now my sister Mudrīte and I are the only two left. Father Švāns worked as a construction foreman and firefighter in the boss. Mum Švāne Herta worked all her life with animals, looking after horses, milking cows, caring for young cattle and pigs. We had a strict family routine where once told, it should have been done immediately. Parents have been at work since for small days. In our home "Vārpas" fruit trees were planted in three rows, apple trees, cherries, gooseberries, blackcurrants and currants. The house was small, just one room with viruses. Every Saturday my mother baked bread. On holidays she baked white bread, pies. On Saturdays, the room was washed, the floorboards were scrubbed with ash, then vacuumed a room with juniper branches. On Saturdays, sauerkraut soup was cooked. Sauerkraut we had acidified in a big barrel. Fresh, fatty pork was added to the soup. We ate the soup with a mouthful of food and fresh baked bread. During the summer holidays we went to the gatera to rake wood chips, and we also herded chickens in the chicken coop, cows grazed in the centre barn, "Bikškēpos" and "Spulgēs" The most important feast we had was at gatera, when private people sawed boards and logs. This was done after working hours, we - children - we were treated to sweets and biscuits. The driver at the gater was Karl the Greenhoof, who often treated us to treats. Karl liked children very much. Teacher Kete, when she came to the shop, would often buy us children sweets. There was a shop opposite our house. In 1952, Dad took a loan from the bank and started building houses in the village. In 1954 the house was ready. We children also helped building a house. I remember that we were sweating stones for the foundations and caulking with wall cracks in the horseshoes. The name of the house is "Saulaiņi". Dad wanted to build the house at old houses, but the government didn't allow it, they said to build in the village. My dad built "Red Flag", built a barn in "Kalniņi". Even a preserved photo of my dad and his crew participating in the construction work "Corner in the pub". As Mum and Dad went to work, Leonija Rusa looked after us children. She taught us poems. When everyone was at home in the evenings, we recited the poems we had learned poems. Rust lived next door to us. Behind Ruse's home "Namdari", there was home "Ģigari", where the blacksmith Juliet lives. Juliet worked as a helper for a blacksmith

"Kalva", where Inese Cine lived as a child. Juliet also liked children, often visiting us came with a treat. Juliet was lonely.

School years

In the autumn of 1953 I started school. The "Vārnu Primary School" was located 3 km from our home.

The teachers were Eniņš Žanis and Līvija Kete. The school was strictly ordered. Every morning Before lessons all pupils were tested times for numeracy. Class 1 with Class 3 was in the same room. Class 2 and Class 4 were in the other room. There was a big apple tree a garden, and experimental plots for cucumbers, red beetroot and carrots. Summer we went weeding on certain days during the holidays. So we had to work at the communal table during school. Warm tea was given with the bread each day, with a different side dish each time, apples, sour turnips, pickled cucumbers, carrots and red beetroot.

Christmas time at school is a vivid memory. The Christmas tree was decorated, we went to in the forest and picked mint (lingonberries), braided braids, broke pine branches. We learned performances, recited poems.

To make more space, the middle wall was torn down, all four classrooms merged in one place. On Christmas Eve, we performed. Came to Father Christmas, then we showed what we had learned. Everyone was given a big parcel, with apples, candy, cookies and gingerbread inside. Then we sat down We enjoyed a cocoa drink, pies and pastries. To all sponsored by "Darba spars". The delicious feast was host Rita Rutka. One day, some six kids were coming from school, and we saw them running towards the gater a big bull in our direction. We children hid behind the big stacks of logs, we waited for the bulls to leave. The same day, the hunters shot the animal. He was already had seduced Greenhoff Karl. Then, in the evening, the hunters gave Dad the bull's head. Mum made a delicious galette. We, the whole family, could eat for a whole week.

In early spring 1954, a bridge was built over the Viesati River. The bridge was crossed long boardwalk. Because the river was rushing down, roaring, bubbling, as it does in the spring floods. I was

terrible fear of going over, then my dad met me and carried me across.

The old bridge was made of planks and railings. The bridge started where it is now Rasa Sofia's house, and walked straight across the river between the barn and the community centre.

After the fourth grade I started going to Strutele school, which was located in Skuju manor, together with

dairy. My uncle Laimonis Kaunesis lived next to the school and worked tractor driver on a pond farm. Mum arranged with my uncle for me to live with him.

I didn't have to stay at boarding school. And so I spent my fifth and sixth years living with uncle. During the summer holidays at Laimonis's, I worked, weeded, helped harvest harvesting, stacking firewood, and sometimes looking after Laimonis' daughter (my cousin).

At times

had to go out to pasture, the private cows were all eleven together, and each family after grazed in turn. I had good playmates in my free time in the summer, who were classmates. They were Māris Brāncis, Vera Platace and Liene Pole. We played games, we

various games, we staged plays ourselves. That's why Maris was trained as an actor. With Liene we still meet and call every now and then.

In the autumn of 1959, a new school was built in Strutele near the Strutele Church. I'm now starting sixth grade. The school was stately, bright. There was a big park around the school.

In autumn, after school, all of us children would go raking leaves. The school was named Krišjāņa

The headmaster of the school was Imants Brūveris, an active, smart and hard-working man. His wife Velta Brūvere taught us housekeeping. The headmaster - geography and history. Imants (Po)'s sister Velta Kempele taught German and folk dances.

Velta's husband taught us sports. He taught the children to play sports games, including basketball, which I was very interested in. Teacher Karklins Ārija singing lessons. Millija Carska taught English and maths. Ose Dināra was my teacher in 5th grade. In 7th and 8th grade my teacher was Antonina Brocane. When I finished sixth grade, suddenly the headmaster Imants Brūveris came in and calls me into his office. I was worried: what had I done? He give me a text written on a page to read expressively. It turns out that I had read the farewell greetings to the graduates of Grade 7.

The school was named after Krišjāņa Barons because of the nearby home "Pladaras", where he was born. A stone commemorating Krišjānis Barons has been erected at the school.

In this document you can read just a small part of the possibilities for researching your family history and is intended for beginners. It is best if there is an opportunity to interview older people in the family. A self-written life story is also a great way to pass on information to the family, if the family does not have the time to do an interview and write down the life story, or if the family is not interested at the moment, there may come a time when the family would be interested in learning more about their ancestors and the times in which they lived. In addition to researching old newspapers on periodika.lv, there are other online resources and archive documents to explore.

14. Meeting with the project participants and the author of the biography in July 2021

- The idea of the project was presented to the audience;
- project participants presented their achievements in collecting family stories;
- The meeting took place in Jurģi village, Jaunpils parish, Tukums municipality. The participants were the people of the nearby houses, some of whom are also mentioned in the written story;
- The participants sang together the author's favourite songs and enjoyed snacks;
- the meeting is shown in a video on youtube.com, Jaunpils RAC Rats.

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