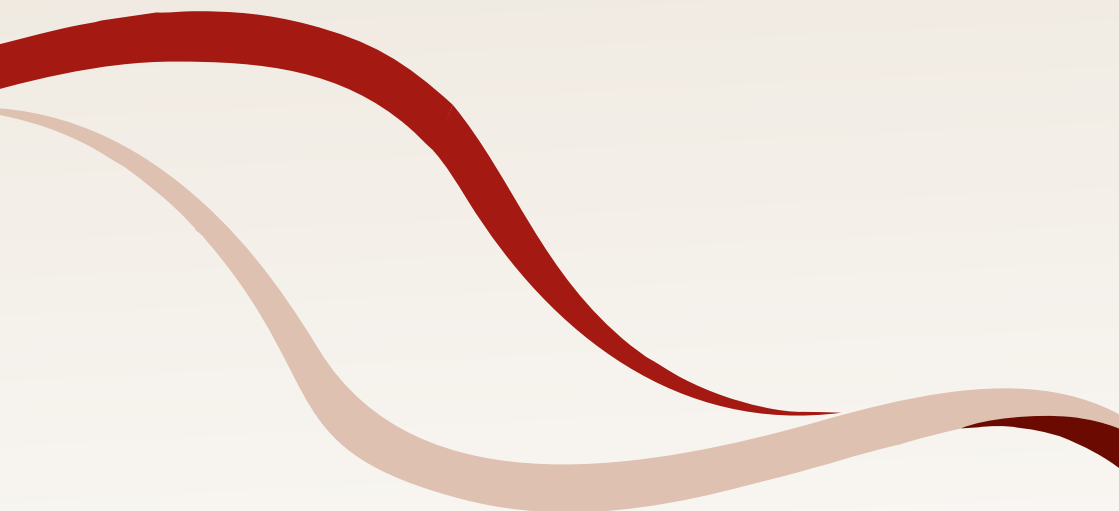


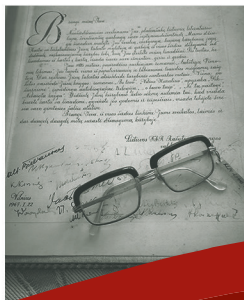


CULTURAL ROUTE THE PATHS OF EVE

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Writer Ieva Simonaitytė
and her legacy.

Ieva Simonaitytė (Ewa Simoneit) (born on January 23, 1897 in Vanagai, died on August 27, 1978 in Vilnius, buried in Vilnius Antakalnis Cemetery) is one of the most famous Lithuanian women writers of the 20th century. She was born in Lithuania Minor – the region, which belonged to Prussia before the First World War, and in 1923 was annexed to Lithuania. The uniqueness of Ieva Simonaitytė as a writer originates from two different cultural traditions – German and Lithuanian. Having taken a conscious decision to be a Lithuanian, she described picturesquely in her novels, short stories and memoirs the households and personalities of the people of Lithuania Minor of the early and the first half of 20th century, and created memorable literary characters. The writer enjoyed an early recognition, and the streets, a library, and gymnasium in the Lithuanian towns and cities were named after her.

To commemorate the 120th anniversary of the writer Ieva Simonaitytė, Gargždai Land Museum prepared cultural route “The paths of Evė” and published a brochure introducing it. It is expected that the brochure will become a helpful tool for tourists and the people interested in the history of culture and literature to better understand the biography of I. Simonaitytė and encourage to look back to or rediscover the creative work and legacy of the famous writer.

HISTORIC PRIEKULĖ

The Priekulė Town is situated along the picturesque bend of the Minija River overgrown with centuries-old oaks. In ancient times, an important road connecting Samogitia, Karšuva and Skalva ran through the place. Archaeological finds testify that the Priekulė settlement dates back as far as the Stone Age. Historical sources originally referred to the settlement as Paminija. The tax books of 1540 mention the Elder Lucas Priekulis (Lucas Precol), whose name was allegedly passed to the settlement. The reference to a teacher in Priekulė dates back to 1594, thus the school has already commemorated the 400th anniversary. The first priest of the Evangelical Lutheran parish founded in 1587 was Andreas Poška.

The first Priekulė church was built in 1636. It was a fachwerk building with a beautiful bell tower, which had a weathercock. A graveyard was laid down around the church.

Between the end of the 16th century and the 17th century, Priekulė developed into an administrative, spiritual and commercial centre. A shop operated there already in 1614. A privileged inn was founded at the beginning of the 18th century, which later turned into a kölmisch property (Lith. kulminis dvaras). There is also a 1713 reference to the Domėnai state estate, which was rented by Grubė, a famous beer producer of Priekulė. A court was established in 1770.

*The old railway
station of Priekulė*



*Priekulė Evangelical Lutheran Church,
the oldest Evangelical Lutheran church in
Klaipėda region, stood here until 1954*



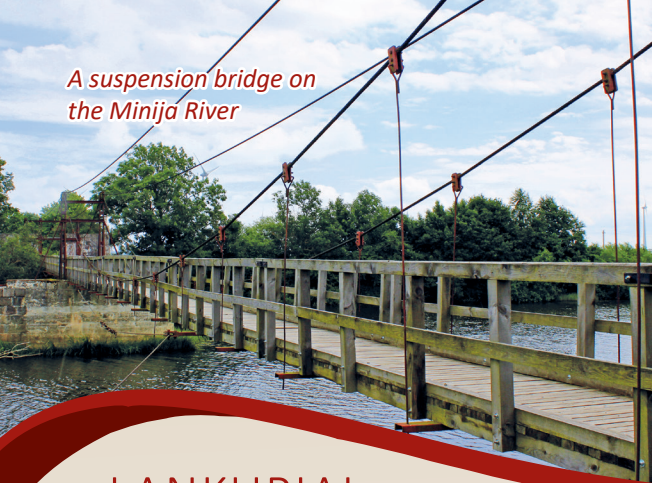
*The old Priekulė
Evangelical
Lutheran Church*

The Priekulė town developed at the intersection of five roads: apart from the main Klaipėda-Šilutė road, the only road to Dreverna ran through the town, as well as the roads to Lankupiai, Ventė and Agluonėnai.

The development of communications that took part in the nineteenth century was of particular significance to the growth of the town. In 1846, the Klaipėda-Priekulė highroad was built and, in the year 1853, the highroad connected Priekulė with Šilutė and Tilžė towns. The metal two-arch bridge over Minija laid in 1886 is still in operation today. The King Wilhelm Canal dug out fairly close to Priekulė in 1873, which ensured the access from Nemunas River to Klaipėda, greatly shortened the cargo and timber transportation route. The railway was laid in 1875, following which a spacious railway station sprang up in Priekulė. In 1885, the landlord Gleichas built a new post-office in Priekulė. Between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, a pharmacy, B. Šmitas dairy, brickyard (the mother of Ieva Simonaitytė worked there for some time), two mixed goods shops and the Prūsų dvaras hotel operated in the town. In 1898, the gas street lighting was installed in Priekulė. After the reconstruction carried out in 1885, the church was equipped with a bell-tower and a clock. A volunteer firefighters' society was established in 1900. In 1902, the phone was introduced. A variety of new multi-storey brick houses were built in Priekulė at the beginning of the 20th century. From 1950 to 1959, Priekulė was the centre of the district.

The memory of Ieva Simonaitytė is inseparable from Priekulė. The Priekulė Gymnasium bears her name, the Šventvakarių Ėvė sculpture dedicated to Ieva Simonaitytė decorates the centre of the town (erected in 1997, author Daliutė Ona Matulaitė), and the town houses the Memorial Museum of Ieva Simonaitytė.

*A suspension bridge on
the Minija River*



*The grave of I. Simonaitė
grandparents from
father's side*

LANKUPIAI

After all, it was not like that, it was quite different. For Heaven's sake, why is it she now pins all the blame on us? <...> If only she hadn't mixed up there with him ... Didn't I tell her? 'Come on, Ėtmė' I say, 'He's a farmer's son after all. How long will you live with him? He'll get bored with you, and he will just ...' And she: 'Oh, what kind of a farmer's son is there, it's he who ran after me, and not me after him, so now what's all this fuss about ... Was not our father a farmer?' And what's the point of talking to her! It was ... It was. What were our fields and what are those in Lankupiai. Ours was poor sand and pinewood, while theirs ... But too late to talk now! Now we see. Oh, and Ėtmė was a robust girl. Some even used to say she was beautiful. <...> Today even, she could get married to move to some small farm. Great many wanted her and still do.'

Ieva Simonaitytė '... and it was so'

The village on the banks of Minija River, located on both sides of the river 8 km south-east of Priekulė. In 1863, the excavation of King Wilhelm Canal was launched. Multitude of the ships and rafts on the route via Nemunas to Klaipėda would stop at the Lankupiai lock. It was installed during the excavation of the channel to adjust the water level. The lock was kept open only when Minija was in flood or during the storms in the Curonian Lagoon. It is 157-meter length and has double leaf gates at both ends. The lock opening is 11-meter wide, therefore, the channel did not allow large ships to sail. At the beginning of the 20th century, the longest suspension bridge in Lithuania was laid in Lankupiai over the Minija River. It had 130-meter length and 1.4-meter width. During that period, the

great village of Lankupiai was an important settlement in the neighbourhood. A dairy, a post office and a school operated there.

The Stubrai family of the Lankupiai village farmers is associated with the biography of the writer Ieva Simonaitytė. The mother of the writer, Ėtmė Simonaitytė, was a hired hand at their farm. The farmers' eldest son, Jurgis, found the diligent young girl attractive, but his parents were against such relationship. Ėtmė, big with child, was packed off, and Jurgis was deprived of the right to inherit the parental farm. Having become a well-known writer, Ieva Simonaitytė maintained contact with her relatives. She used to visit the graves of her ancestors from the father's side buried in the Lankupiai cemetery. The farmstead of the Stubrai family did not survive until our time.

ŠVENTVAKARIAI

Mother that autumn moved to Šventvakariai village, to the flat of farmer Kuršaitis. Most likely, she moved to be closer to Priekulė and the Rašas brickyard.

In that winter, my mother took up weaving, and I gradually began to discover my 'true vocation': I became an earnest and caring babysitter.

Ieva Simonaitytė '... and it was so'

The village is situated along the Minija River in Klaipėda District Priekulė Eldership. Although Šventvakariai does not make a deciding place in the biography of Ieva Simonaitytė, still, in the memories of the writer, the village becomes the beginning of a new life stage. While living there, at the age of seven or eight, she began to earn her bread as a babysitter of small children who often were newborn babies. Due to the volatile income and the miserable household, the mother of the future writer, Etmė Simonaitytė, who was condemned to raise the sick daughter on her own, had to often move with her daughter from one place of living to another. Their life in Šventvakariai lasted for a year. The reason why, after that time, they were forced to leave, Ieva Simonaitytė describes as follows:

One day Kuršaitis came and told my mother that the eldership of the village had decided to evict her from Šventvakariai. As she has a beggar child, she, one fine day, may choose to ask for bread to feed her child.

- The village does not want to have beggars. - While speaking so, he was moving his neck to the right, then to the left, as if the collar was too tight. There were rumours in the village that Kuršaitis picked up that habit from his brood mare. Again, others seriously argued that it was not he, who copied the mare, but that the mare had learned from him how to wag the head.

And what was mother's response to such a humiliation? Nothing at all. She was too proud to argue with such a 'lord'. We moved out within a couple of days or so.

Ieva Simonaitytė '... and it was so'

The cemetery of Šventvakariai village has survived to this day, and is well preserved. The inscriptions on the tombs speak of the life of the village that has been long gone: the Lithuanian names in the Gothic font, which is replaced gradually by the Latin, testify the multifaceted and complex national and cultural identity of the inhabitants of this region, to the commemoration of which Ieva Simonaitytė contributed with her creative work.



**Traditional Lutheran
cemetery of Klaipėda region**



*Preserved complex
of buildings of children foster
home, later on used as
correctional facility*

GROPIŠKIAI

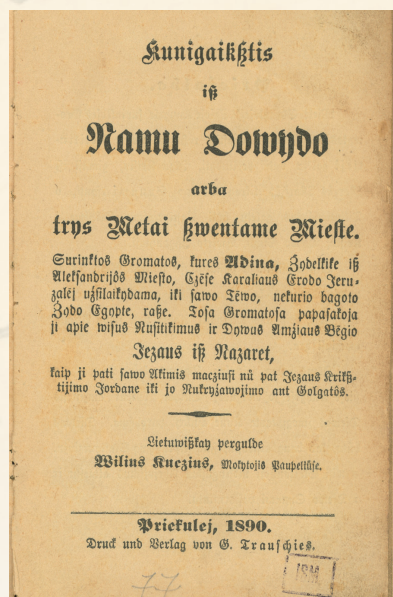
The village is located in Klaipėda District Priekulė Eldership close to the Minija River. It is believed that the name of the village is associated with the name of Mikas Gropas (1871, Gropiškiai – 1955, Neustadt, Holstein-Schleswig, Germany), a public man with a local ancestry. After the merger of Klaipėda Region (Lith. Klaipėdos kraštas) with the state of Lithuania in 1923, he along with other persons established a small credit bank in Priekulė, where he worked as a teller until 1939. He also had a gilt and cattle procurement business and was one of the founders of the Ūkininkų draugija (Farmers' Society) in Priekulė.

Mikas Gropas was engaged in the establishment of the Sandora Lithuanian Evangelical Lutheran Society (1904-1939) of the Lithuania Minor in Tilžė and participated in its activities. The first Statute of this society provides for the unification of all 'brothers Lithuanians' and the dissemination of Christianity and the virtues proclaimed by it among them both in writing and verbally, as well as the fight against the drunkenness and various manifestations of enmity. In 1905, when Vilius Gaigalaitis became the head of the Sandora Society, the focus was placed on the Christian upbringing, it was decided to set up Sunday schools, publish books for children and young people, encourage their learning, and support the poor gifted schoolchildren and students. By engaging in the activities of the society, Mikas Gropas established a private Lithuanian elementary school in his home in Priekulė.

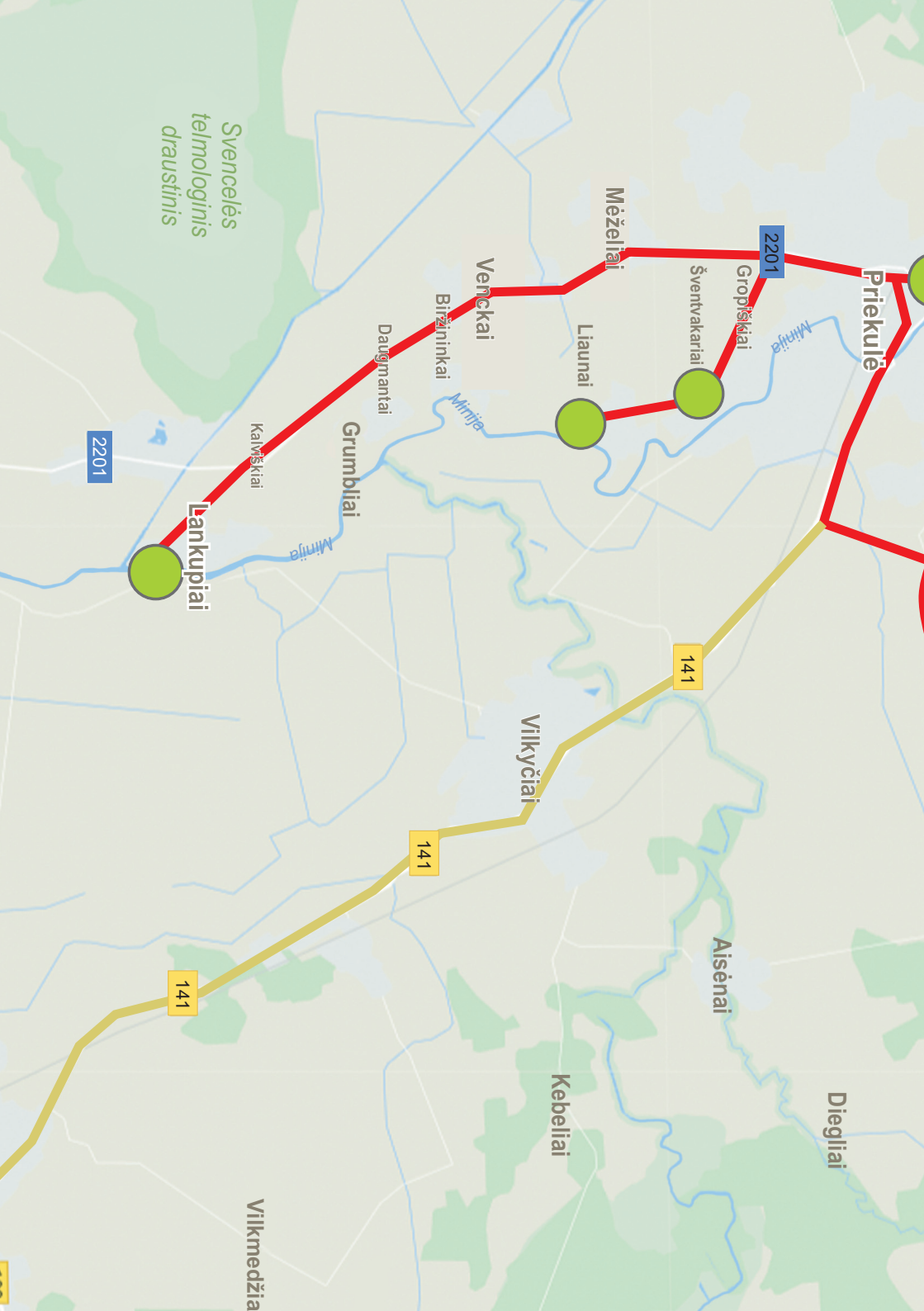
Gropiškiai is also associated with the other enlightened person of this region – Johann Friedrich Franz Schroeder (03 11 1829, Gumbinė – 26 05 1906, Klaipėda). Having

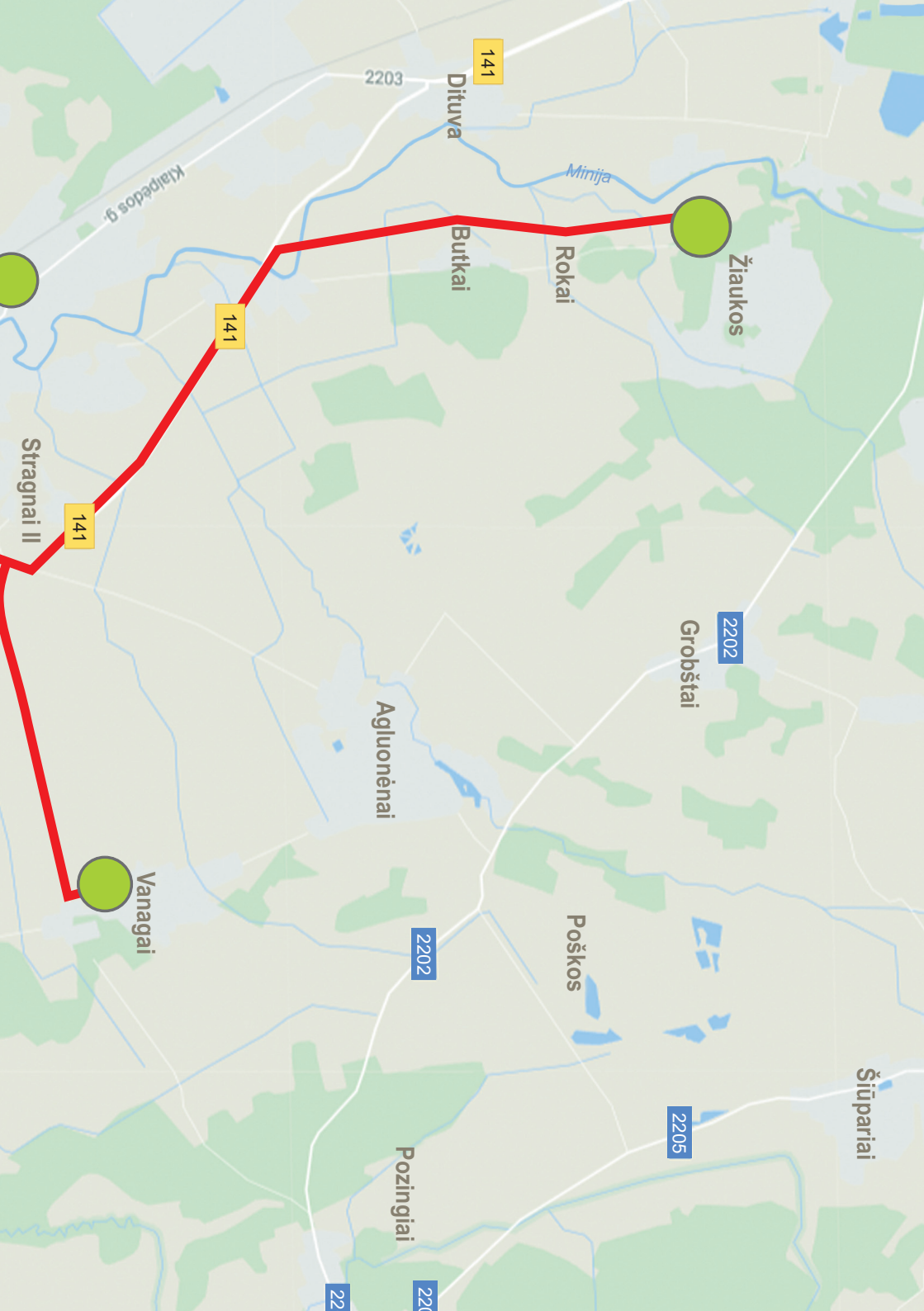
completed the theology studies at the University of Königsberg, in the second half of the 19th century he was appointed to serve as a trainee priest in Priekulė. In 1856, he founded an orphanage shelter in the Elniškė cottar house. Striving to raise money for a steady maintenance of the shelter, he set up a printing house in 1865. A manual printing machine and several hundredweights of fount were purchased. There were 2 to 3 employees working in the printing house. It is true to say that Gropiškis was the place where the first Lithuanian school for typographers was operating, as Johann Friedrich Schroeder taught the typographer's craft those he had in tow and the young people in the neighbourhood. The printing house published solely Lithuanian letters: Lithuanian calendars, books of religious nature for the village, reading books, anti-alcohol proclamations, leaflets, and periodicals such as 'Tiesos prietelis' (Truth Supporter) and 'Konservatyvus draugystės laiškas' (Conservative Letter of Friendship). In 1868, both the printing house and the orphanage shelter moved to Gropiškiai. The printing house was bought in 1875 by a former charge Jurgis Traušys, who moved it to Drukliai in 1886. The educative and educational activities in Gropiškis continued, and, since 1899, the leadership was taken over by the Assembly of the Province who named the institution the 'Schroeder's Province Education Institution in Gropiškiai'. It operated until 1944.

The grave of Johann Friedrich Schroeder is in the park of the former Kliošiai Estate, which is located on the other side of Minija River than Gropiškiai. The expressed will of Johann Friedrich Schroeder was to be buried in a place, which would allow a sight of the educational institution for the young established by him and the former printing house. A part of this complex of buildings has survived until our time. The scenic style Kliošiai Park was founded in the 19th century. To this day, the common beeches of the largest dimensions in Lithuania are growing there.



Although Gropiškiai has not direct ties with the biography of Ieva Simonaitytė, the keen spirit of promoting traditional Lithuanian values and enlightenment, which prevailed here, allows making links with certain facts of the writer's life. A good few Evangelical Lutheran priests took care of the fate and upbringing of the homeless and sick children. It was just because of the concern of the priest Emil Bleiweiss that Ieva Simonaitytė went to be treated to the Incapacitated Children's Home in Angerburg (today Węgorzewo, Poland). Such care and educational institutions for children were common throughout the whole Prussia at the time. At the same time, the stirring activities of those enshrining the Lithuanian language and culture in Priekulė and the surroundings contributed to the formation of the Lithuanian identity of Ieva Simonaitytė.





Žiaukos

Dituva

Butkai

Rokai

Grobštai

Agluonėnai

Poškos

Šiūpariai

Pozingiai

Vanagai

Stragnai II

141

141

141

2203

2202

2202

2205

22

22

VANAGAI

THE BIRTHPLACE OF IEVA SIMONAITYTĖ

'And on the side of the house, which the sun hardly ever reaches, stands another bed. The bed is very spacious. It is so spacious that many people could lie on it. In that bed, she lies with her. They lie so that they do not touch one another. She lays beside the wall: not by the wall of the house, but by the wall of the bed, which is made of planking and is dark red. <...> You can snuggle nicely against that wall. You just have to be careful, so that a straw would not stick from under the sheet and put out the eye. And if someone tucks in the bedclothes from the back, there is nothing better one could crave for. <...>

'So, she lies next to the wall, and she lies by the edge. And the space between them is so large as if somebody was lying there and had left, and no longer comes back. Still, waiting up for him persists...'

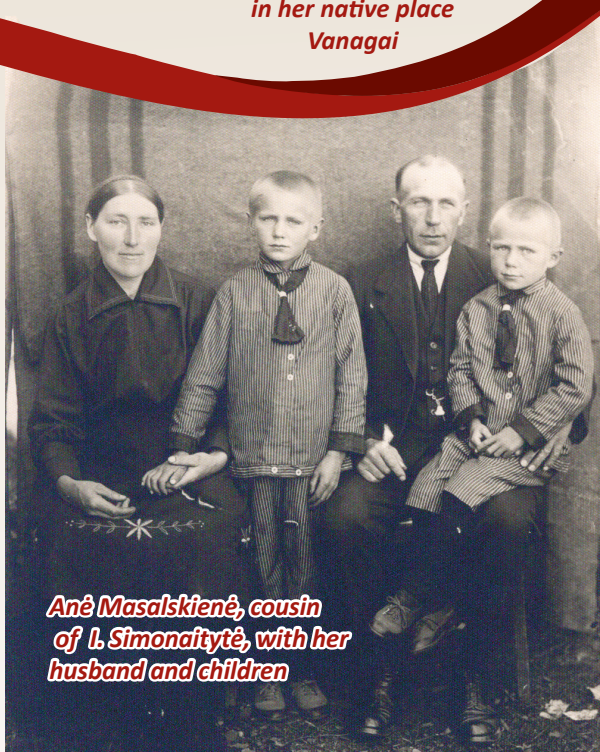
Ieva Simonaitytė '... and it was so'



***I. Simonaitytė Memorial
in her native place
Vanagai***



***Madlė Skrandienė, aunt
of I. Simonaitytė, with her
daughter Martha in 1916***



***Anė Masalskienė, cousin
of I. Simonaitytė, with her
husband and children***

Vanagai is a village 7 km east of Priekulė. The sisters of Ėtmė Simonaitytė (Ieva Simonaitytė's mother) – Ilžė Šauklienė and Marė Dūdjonienė lived there with their families. In her memoirs, the writer says that she spent the first years of her life in the house of Šaukliai family. Later, Ėtmė with her daughter took shelter alternatively in the house of one sister, and then in that of the other.

In 1986, when preparing for the commemoration of 90th anniversary of the birth of Ieva Simonaitytė, the then head of Gargždai Culture House Vytautas Rimavičius initiated the construction of a monument intended to the writer's native land. Vytautas Rimavičius himself, while the writer was still alive, maintained friendly relations with her, and nine documentary books about Ieva Simonaitytė were written by him and published. The wooden sculpture was created by folk artist Vytautas Majoras. A place to install it was selected next to the former Šaukliai farmstead. Trees were planted around the sculpture. Today, the grove has formed in the place, the sigh of which accompanies the imagination of admirers of the creative work of Ieva Simonaitytė to the world perpetuated in the writer's creations.

*I. Simonaitytė with
her relatives in 1957*



VANAGAI CHURCH

'... one evening, after the dedication of the church, I went outside the gate so that I could see the tower of the Vanagai church. I saw it, and it was so gratifying, as if I had just discovered something, as if somebody from the house had just visited me. But, behold, there was something else: I saw it not once, when it comes to seeing, but at that moment I heard it. I heard and it made me tremble. I heard the sound of the Vanagai church bells. Bells ... Those bells! They called me – not towards God, no. And not to the church. I had never been to the church before, and I did not know if any new feeling overwhelms you once there, or you just go there. The time will come when I see my Vanagai church from the inside as well, so, at the moment, it is not important.'

'But the bells were telling me entirely different things. They said that there is something in the world that is more beautiful than the dome of the assembly lamp, and that there is something more assonant than the music of a watering-can. They told me that those pieces of paper or little books that I had studied so devotedly are not much. They told me that there is or there will be something great in the world, something wonderful, something sublime and powerful, and that I will be a part of it ...'

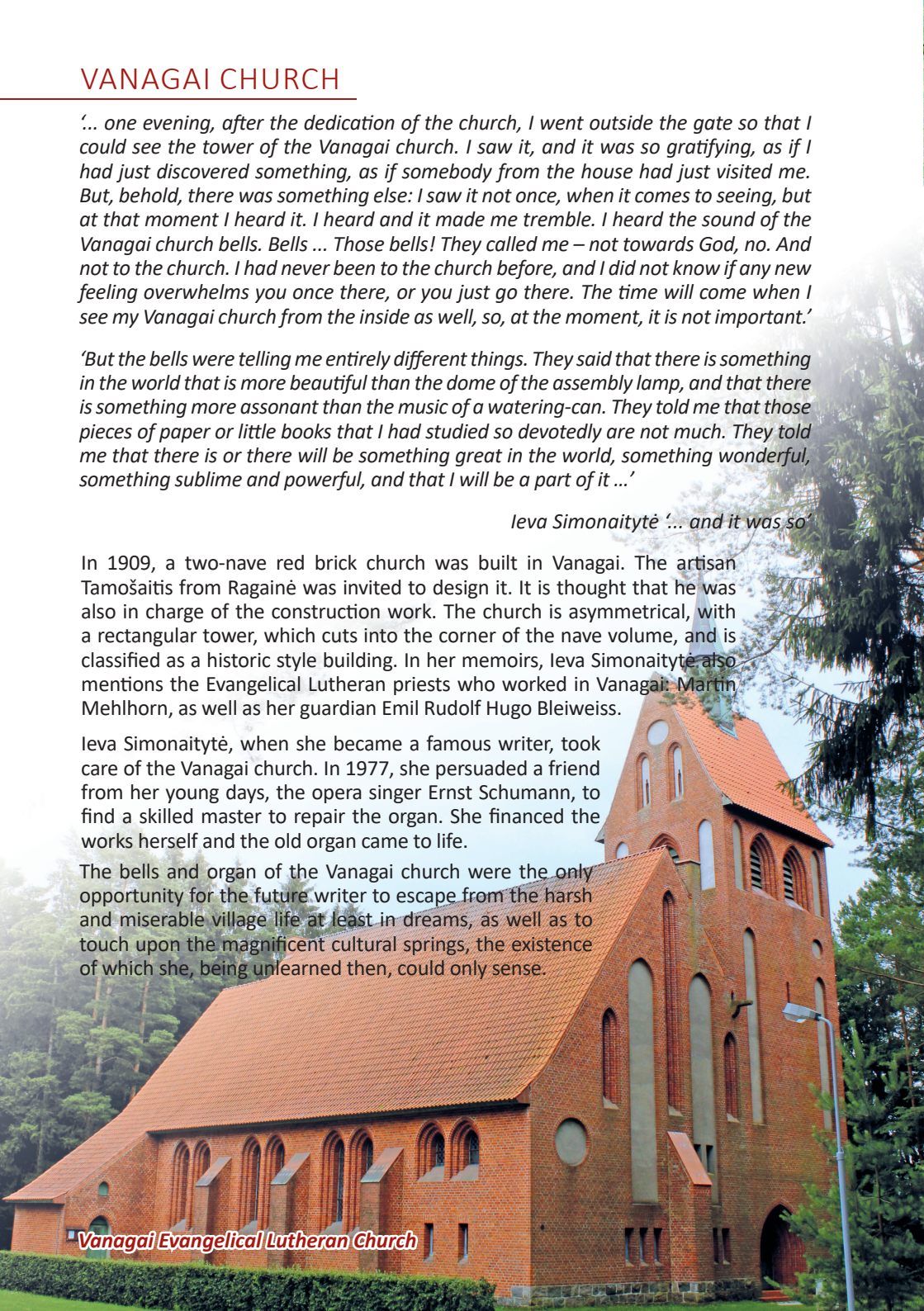
Ieva Simonaitytė '... and it was so'

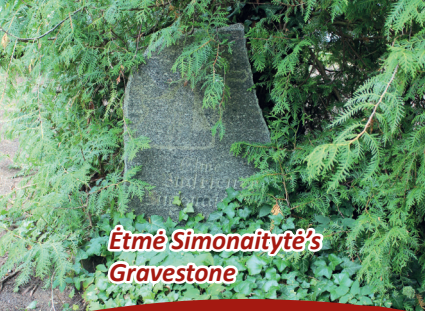
In 1909, a two-nave red brick church was built in Vanagai. The artisan Tamošaitis from Ragainė was invited to design it. It is thought that he was also in charge of the construction work. The church is asymmetrical, with a rectangular tower, which cuts into the corner of the nave volume, and is classified as a historic style building. In her memoirs, Ieva Simonaitytė also mentions the Evangelical Lutheran priests who worked in Vanagai: Martin Mehlhorn, as well as her guardian Emil Rudolf Hugo Bleiweiss.

Ieva Simonaitytė, when she became a famous writer, took care of the Vanagai church. In 1977, she persuaded a friend from her young days, the opera singer Ernst Schumann, to find a skilled master to repair the organ. She financed the works herself and the old organ came to life.

The bells and organ of the Vanagai church were the only opportunity for the future writer to escape from the harsh and miserable village life at least in dreams, as well as to touch upon the magnificent cultural springs, the existence of which she, being unlearned then, could only sense.

Vanagai Evangelical Lutheran Church





***Etmė Simonaitytė's
Gravestone***



***Marė Dūdjonienė, aunt
of I. Simonaitytė, and her
husband's gravestone***



***Emily Rudolph
Hugo Bleweiss'
gravestone***



VANAGAI CEMENTERY

The ethnographic cemetery of Vanagai village still functions as the Vanagai parish cemetery. Many of the famous people of Lithuania Minor were buried there. The guardian of Ieva Simonaitytė, a priest Emil Rudolf Hugo Bleiweiss, rests among them. He worked in the Vanagai parish 1905 to 1913. The energetic clergyman was the first to notice and appreciate the exceptional talents of the little Ėvikė. He took care of her, and arranged for her to be sent to Angenburg for treatment. In 1913, he was transferred to the parish of Vyžiai, where he died after a couple of years due to an illness. Simonaitytė felt gratitude to this priest throughout her entire life. During the war, the Vyžiai church was damaged, and later it was converted into a grain warehouse and tractors were driving over the churchyard where Emil Bleiweiss was buried. In 1970, in response to this situation,

Ieva Simonaitytė decided to carry out the re-burial of the relics of her beloved benefactor in Vanagai cemetery, and organized the construction of a monument for him.

There is a cenotaph with the inscription 'Etmė Budrienė. Simonaičių šeima' in the Vanagai cemetery. It is the symbolic grave of the mother of Ieva Simonaitytė. Etmė Budrienė died in Vilnius in 1941 and was buried in K. Kalinauskas street cemetery. No stone was put, therefore, the place of the grave just disappeared from the sight of the daughters. Later, the cemetery was eliminated altogether, and the Wedding Palace was erected in its place. The cenotaph for Etmė Budrienė was placed in Vanagai cemetery by the relatives only after the death of Ieva Simonaitytė.

Majority of the closest relatives of Ieva Simonaitytė rest in this cemetery. The sisters of the writer's mother – Ilžė Šauklienė and Marė Dūdjonienė with their families and mother's brother Jokūbas Simonaitis are among them. Some traditional burial markers of Lithuania Minor – baptisms (Lith. krikštai) have survived in the cemetery to this day.



***I. Simonaitytė Memorial
Museum in Priekulė***

IEVA SIMONAITYTĖ MEMORIAL MUSEUM

‘So I’ve had that little summerhouse built on the bank of Minija to have a place to rest in the summer. We had the housewarming party in 1961 . How much did it cost? Quite a lot. I did not pay for everything myself – the government has contributed. After my death, it will pass to this land that I love and that hates me. But ... maybe even they will start cherishing me when I die...’

Ona Pajedaitė ‘She was Simonaitytė’

Ieva Simonaitytė Memorial Museum was founded in 1979 in the former summerhouse of the writer in Priekulė. The exhibition presented to visitors on July 6, 1984 includes photographs, books, original documents, and personal articles of the writer. The rooms of the summerhouse retain the authentic (1961-1978) environment: furniture, souvenirs – gifts and works of art. The library of the old books presented in the writer’s study is especially valuable. In 2009, the museum became the branch of Gargždai Land Museum and 2018-2019 the museum was renovated.

The surroundings of the museum are decorated with a rose garden, white-blossoming jasmines with their intoxicating odour, a tall branchy Greek walnut, as well as the major adornment of the garden – the red-leaved beetle, which can be spotted from far. It is a pleasure to listen to nightingales singing there in the spring. It is said, that it was because of them that the writer decided to have the summerhouse built at the bend of the Minija River.

ŽIAUKOS VILLAGE CEMETERY

The village is located on the Minija River, 14 km southeast of Klaipėda and 7 km north of Priekulė. **Jurgis Stubra** (1977-1938), a son of Lankupiai village farmers and **the father** of the writer **Ieva Simonaitytė**, having lost his inheritance right to the parental farm because of the illegitimate daughter, moved to Žiaukos to the house of Ilzė Kiliūtė whom he married, and raised seven children with her. After death, he was buried in the cemetery of Žiaukos village. Ieva Simonaitytė used to visit her father's grave and took care of its maintenance.

Here's how the writer describes her first and perhaps the last meeting with her father in her memoir book:

My dear baby!

The father and his daughter are sitting in front of each other in Brukninė, the

tavern of Poškos village. There are two glasses of wine and a paper with some candies - the ones that were available at the time, when people indicated the date as nineteen hundred and twenty – on the table. The wine is dark, but bright red, a rare and unusual beverage, and tasty. It reddens the cheeks of the daughter, not the father.

Brukninė is a secluded, poor, simple and, one could say, somewhat forgotten place, just like the whole Poškos village. Here, you needed not fear of meeting someone you knew or maybe someone you were not willing to meet. So, there will be no rumours that, how come, after so many years he invited his "firstborn" daughter to see her. No, he was safe here.

*Ieva Simonaitytė '... and it was so',
Part III*



Simonaitytė's grave in Antakalnis Cemetery



Simonaitytė's house in Klaipėda



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