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Family Letter 2017

Of the v. Tiesenhausen Family

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Family trip thru Lithuania and Courland

After trips to Livonia and Estonia in the past, this year in August we undertook an excursion to Lithuania and Courland. Twenty members of the family between the age of seven and seventy-seven started from the former Lithuanian

capital of Kaunas with a cultural agenda. We visited the Ciurlionis museum, where pictures, painted by Italian and Netherlands masters, can be found which once were in the possession of the Tiesenhausen family. According to the Lithuanian-Polish way of writing the family name is spelled Tyzenhauz. In Vilnius, the modern times capital, there is in the Tyzenhauzu gatve – the Tiesenhausen street – an old manor, which served as a hospital, following a donation by the family, since the 19th century. Today it is abandoned and boarded up with the future use still undecided. By the way: since our visit the street sign is missing. Rumors say it is now decorating another manor in the Rhine area.



In front of the former Tiesenhausen manor in Vilnius at the right side the sign with the street name is missing.

A very special experience was the visit to Roskiskis situated north of Vilnius not far from the Latvian border. In 1715 count Ignatius Tiesenhausen acquired this estate and had the manor house erected. In the 19th century, his descendants donated the St Matthäus Church a generous neo gothic chapel which is said to have cost more than one million gold Rubles. Guided by the local pastor and a German speaking historian, we could admire the church, the crypt located under the altar with the graves of the donors, as well as two life-size bronze statues of the

family's progenitor Engelbrecht Tiesenhausen and the donor Reinhold count Tyzenhauz. We also had the opportunity to take lots of photos.



The travel group in front of the statue of our ancestor Engelbrecht Tiesenhausen in the St. Matthäus-Church in Rokiskis. On the left the museum curator and the local pastor of the catholic parish.

In the former manor house, which is today a museum, we were met by the curator and her staff. During an extensive tour of the manor, we could admire many exhibits which reminded of the family members. For example Konstantin Tyzenhauz (1786 – 1853) an ornithologist who is acknowledge until today or of Sophia Tyzenhauz, the first female author to publish in Lithuanian language. Shortly after regaining Lithuanian independence, a group formed itself in Roskikis to maintain the estate and the heritage of the counts Tyzenhauz. This group had prepared a reception for us in the museum which provided opportunity for further exchange. It was moving to see the enthusiasm with which these people took into their hands to preserve the history of the Tiesenhausen family in Lithuania.



In front of the fire place decorated with our coat of arms in the Roskiskis manor house together with the museum staff and the members of the group which maintains the Tyzenhauz heritage

After a festive dinner and a refreshing night at the Mesothern palace, which was once endowed by the Russian Czar to the princess Charlotte von Lieven, we continued our journey to the Ruhenthal/Rundale palace which is a jewel of the baroque area in Courland. It used to be the summer residence of the duke of Courland Ernst Johann Biron. Thanks to the dedication of Dr.Imants Lancmanis it was brought back to its old beauty including a baroque park and garden which was rebuild in the recent years according to preexisting historic plans. Our last destination in Courland was Libau/Liepaja. Waltraut Tiesenhausen, born Glasenapp, whose family lived until the relocation in the 1940ies in Libau, is active since more than 25 years to support sick, disabled and old people in this city. In addition she has contributed significantly to the town twinning agreement between Darmstadt and Libau. Therefore our program consisted not only of visits to social facilities but also of a festive dinner with many Latvian guests who have become friends for many years.

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Next Time Belarus?

After visits to Livonia (2009), Estonia (2011) and Lithuania and Courland (2017) we could imagine a family trip to Belarus in the coming years. There too we can find testimonies of the existence of the Tiesenhausen/Tyzenhauz family worth seeing. For example in Hrodna close to the southern Lithuanian border. There Antoni Tiesenhausen held a feud from the king of Poland. He founded more than twenty manufacturing facilities in and around Hrodna where craftsmen from Germany, the Netherlands, France, Russia and Switzerland taught local workers how to produce paper, ceramics and other goods in high demand.

He founded schools for architects, doctors and accountants as well as a cadet corps to develop future officers. Thanks to him Hrodna had a theater, an orchestra and a printing plant which produced the first newspaper in Belarus. Close to the eastern border of Lithuania there is Pastawy which came into the possession of the Tiesenhausen family in 1720. The palace was erected in 1788 in the classicist style and served later as a hospital. Today it houses a museum which remembers of its original owners and houses the ornithological collection of Konstantin Tiesenhausen.

All of this is contained in the booklet titled „Auf dem Weg der Familie Tiesenhausen“, which is published by the Latvian, Lithuanian and Belarus touristic association with support from the European Union. Moreover, the Council of Europe finances the multilingual signposting of places in these three countries. Unfortunately travelling in Belarus is not as easy as in countries of the European Union. For touristic group trips a visa can be waived if the country is entered via Minsk and certain requirements are met. We will be monitoring this development in Belarus closely.

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News from the Family

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The travel group in front of the manor house in Rokiskis, build by Ignotas Tyzenhauz (1760 bis 1822)