

Who left these footprints here?

Let's discover Vana-Pärnu

The beginning of the journey (J. V. Jannseni Street 39 – Vana-Pärnu kultuurikeskus)

The building of Ülejõe elementary school was built in 1872 and it has housed a school, a kindergarten, a vocational school, a library. Since 2014 the building has been fully operated by Vana-Pärnu kultuuriselts as a cultural centre.



Photo by Silvi Kanošina.

Stop 1, Siimu bridge

The first bridge across Pärnu river was established in 1803. The building of the floating pontoon bridge (known as the „leather bridge“ among people) was led by local merchants. A couple of decades later a similar bridge was built across Sauga river and the bridge was called Siimu bridge by the Siimu inn nearby.

In the old days the commute from Pärnu to Tallinn or to Western Estonia went through Vana-Pärnu: through Tallinn gates and the river was crossed by boat or a raft. Before the mouth of the river was deepened the river was even crossed on a horse and carriage during the low tide.

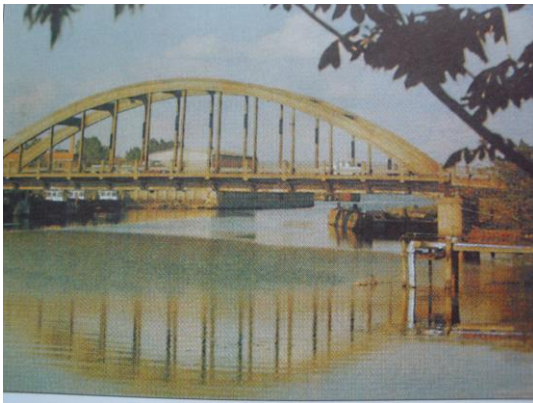
Building the bridge across Pärnu river marked the beginning of a direct road to Tallinn. This road was first named Jänesselja street by the Jänesselja manor which was situated where now Sauga part of town is.



The first bridge, also known as the leather bridge connected Vana-Pärnu with Pärnu Ülejõe suburbs and was built in the 1920s (a couple of decades after opening the bridge across Pärnu river). The bridge lasted for more than a hundred years. Photo of an old postcard.



The bridge over Sauga river was named after the Siimu inn looking over the bridge on Vana-Pärnu's side. Photo from the book „Vana-Pärnu 750 – piiskoplinnast tänapäeva“ by S. Sarv.

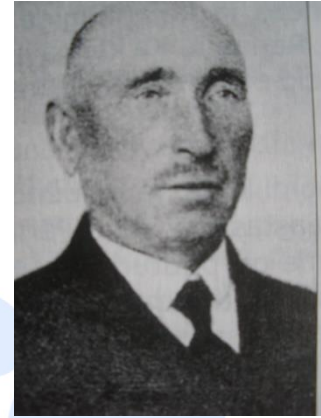
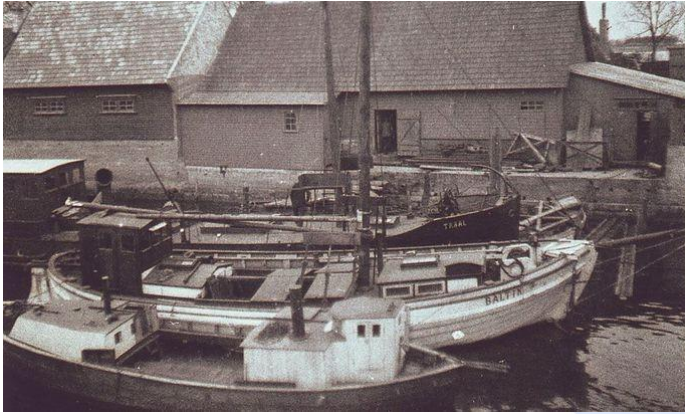


On August 6th 1937 the reinforced concrete arch bridge was opened. However, the bridge did not last long – on September 23rd 1944 it was blown up together with the main bridge of Pärnu. A wooden floating bridge was built to replace the concrete bridge. Today's arch bridge that resembles the original one was opened in late 1957. Photo from the book „Vana-Pärnu 750 – piiskoplinnast tänapäeva“ by S. Sarv.

Stop 2, August Tolle's fish industry (Haapsalu Street 5)

On February 22nd 1924 „Meri“, a society for seamen and fishermen was established. „Meri“ connected fishermen in the areas of Ülejõe and Vana-Pärnu. The number of members reached 160 already by the end of the first year. The society provided help for local fishermen and their families: buying nets and traps, applying for low-percentage loans, battling against poachers. At the same time the society provided cultural entertainment, arranged tea- and dance evenings, family meetings etc.

The honorary member of the society was August Tolle. He owned the buildings at Haapsalu Street 5, there were smokers there and a fish oven was being built. His enterprise was nationalized in 1940. On March 15th 1945 Pärnu Kalakombinaat (Pärnu Fish-processing plant) started its work at Haapsalu Street 5: a fishing brigade was formed, a fish collecting point was established, salting rooms were added. There was no cold storage warehouse, so based on the practice in the Far East cold storage buildings were assembled from ice blocks. In Estonian climate these warehouses lasted only for a couple of years.



August Tolli's (in the picture) ships and production buildings on the bank of Sauga river (Haapsalu Street 5). When the canned fish processing plant was opened in 1957, the previous fish processing plant buildings in Vana-Pärnu were left empty and they eventually burnt down. Photos from the book „Vana-Pärnu 750 – piiskoplinnast tänapäeva“ by S. Sarv.

Stop 3, Aspe's bench (Haapsalu Street 7)

In the autumn of 2013 the nordic walkers and hikers from Vana-Pärnu kultuuriselts lit candles on the graves of the well-known people buried in Vana-Pärnu cemetery. Lighting a candle in honour of Elisabeth Aspe, an Estonian author who lived in Vana-Pärnu her whole life, sparked a thought that the famous author deserves remembering. The idea was to design a bench in her honour by the time of Aspe's 155th birthday (December 15th 2015) and place it near her childhood home in Vana-Pärnu. The bench was opened on December 13th 2015.



Photo by Silvi Kanošina.



Photo from the book „Vana-Pärnu 750 – piiskoplinnast tänapäeva“ by S. Sarv.

Elisabeth Aspe

(December 15th 1860 – August 25th 1927, daughter of Madis Aspe)

Author. Her first story was published in the newspaper „Eesti Postimees“ in 1881, followed by several other writings. Her masterpiece „Ennossaare

Ain“ has been considered one of the best works of 20th century Estonian prose by literature critics.

Elisabeth Aspe spent her whole life in Vana-Pärnu, except 1891 when she and her sister Katariina travelled to St. Petersburg after the death of their father. After looking for a job for a long time she got employment in an asylum for pupils of low intelligence near St. Petersburg where work was rather difficult, yet satisfying. A message about her sister Maria's grave illness brought Elisabeth back to Pärnu the very next year. The same year she married merchant Heirich Nieländer. They had three children - two sons and a daughter.

Elisabeth Aspe's marital bliss was darkened by the cloud of disease that ran in the Aspe family – tuberculosis. The disease took Aspe's both sisters, three grown-up cousins, her husband (in 1903) and her son (in 1907).

Despite this misfortune Elisabeth Aspe continued writing. In 1910 her last short story won the only monetary prize of 50 rubles in the contest by the newspaper „Postimees“. This was the first fee she ever received for her writing.

The last part of Elisabeth Aspe's life was spent quietly in Vana-Pärnu, enriched by visits from poet Miina Härma and author Aino Kallas. The greatest joy came from her children – son Heinrich and daughter Karin. Heinrich graduated from the university in Berlin and stayed there to work in the field of business. Karin worked as a teacher in Russia, in 1915 she returned to Pärnu in order to be by her mother's side.

Stop 4, dyeing, knitted fabrics and sewing factory Marat (Haapsalu Street 18)

A nowadays well-known building in Vana-Pärnu is the Marat knitted fabrics, later sewing factory.

Before World War II these same old buildings housed Hans Kütt's dyeing factory. Hans Kütt (born in 1847) started his career in Viljandi, in Schneeberg's fabric dyeing industry as an apprentice. During 1897-1909 he was the manager of Vichmann's fabric dyeing industry, after which he rented the Räägu mill and dyeing industry in Sauga until 1922. At the same time, in 1918, he established the fabric dyeing industry in Vana-Pärnu. Kütt was one of the first to earn a diploma in his field.



In 1940 all of the biggest companies in Estonia were nationalized including the textile industry located in Pärnu. The workers of the new textile factory named it Marat by the famous French revolutionary.

After several reorganisations Marat grew to be an important producer of knitted fabrics. In 1963 the factory got an addition to the original Hans Kütt's factory – a two-storey production building. In 1972 a new three-storey building was built.



Both photos are from the book „Vana-Pärnu 750 – piiskoplinnast tänapäeva“ by S. Sarv.

Stop 5, Aspe (also known as Emajõe) quarter (At the beginning of Haapsalu Street from Pärnu river until Emajõe Street)

Madis Aspe was born in 1820 in Sauga. He got his education in Abram Holter's writing school which was considered one of the best schools in Estonia at that time. Aspe had a dream to become a school teacher, he was only 18 when he applied for the job and was approved. However, the baron refused to allow that and made Aspe serve him instead. In the baron's service Aspe learnt accounting and other necessary knowledge for running a household. By the age of 30 he left the service of the baron and moved to Pärnu where he bought a small mill, a year later a bigger one. Hard work paid off, so Aspe soon leased some land and an old Dutch-style saw and flour mill by the road to Tallinn. The land was abundant. In just a few years he was able to pay back his debt, build new and more spacious buildings and create a big garden.

The enterprising man was chosen a churchwarden, later he participated in the work of Vana-Pärnu court. He was greatly interested in literature, his house was home to almost all books available at that time. J. V. Jannsen's newspaper „Perno Postimees“ was read since the first issue in 1857.

In 1886 Aspe fell ill and was paralyzed for the last three years of his life before passing away in late 1889.

Stop 6, Vana-Pärnu seawall and lighthouse (at the end of Tuulepargi Street)

The two approximately two-kilometer-long seawalls were built between 1863 and 1864.



Photos from the internet.

Stop 7, Vana-Pärnu forest-park (along Merekalda Street from Emajõe Street to Mõrra Street)

There used to be a time when the habitants of the former fishing village that had by then grown into the suburb of Pärnu called Vana-Pärnu could boast about the fantastic sea view they saw from their windows. This superb beauty was more than often disturbed by the stormy gusts of wind that blew over the yards, in the gardens and under the roofs of the houses.



Hugo Alamäe. Photo from the internet.

In September 1964 **Hugo Alamäe** (in the picture), the director of the department of communal services of Pärnu invited the members of the commission of nature conservation Henno Sepp, Tiit Rajaste and Rein Sõmer to his office and told them that the buildings in Vana-Pärnu were threatened by damage from wind and ice, thus a greenway needed to be planted between the residences and the sea. Sepp had to assemble the tools and the planters, Rajaste was to enable the plants and Sõmer brought soil and sticks to mark the spots for planting.

Hugo Alamäe was born in Denmark as a schoolteacher's son. He attended a local school, later a tech school in Tallinn from which he graduated as a mechanics engineer in 1937. Between 1947-58 Alamäe was a teacher and course coordinator of technical subjects for the Pärnu peat industry tech school. As a smart and experienced engineer Alamäe was able to teach through practice. Thanks to his teaching method many graduates from the tech school were employed as technicians-mechanics in many businesses in Pärnu for a long time. In 1958 after the tech school was moved out of town, Alamäe was invited to be the director of the brand new department of communal services of Pärnu. He worked there until retirement. Alamäe passed away on January 20th 1991.

As time passed, the planted park grew more and more dense, until the unkempt brush provided a place for the careless habitants to store their everyday garbage. In 1997 people came together, a local woman Naali-Marie Liivrand as their point person, in order to clean the forest-park of unnecessary brush and trash. It took more than two years to clean everything up.

Naali-Marie Liivrand (born on July 12th 1937)



- Founder of Vana-Pärnu (Kollisti) society
- Point person of cleaning the Vana-Pärnu forest-park
- Pärnu Woman of the Year in 2001
- In 2017 she received a wooden bench named in her honour as a gift for her 80th birthday made by grandfathers of Raeküla

Vana-Pärnu forest-park in its 4,9 hectares offers a playground for children, a nice view and ailment for the soul for walkers.



In 2001 a stone monument was placed in the park to mark the 750th birthday of Vana-Pärnu. All three photos by Silvi Kanošina.

Stop 8, Tõnis Laas's mill (37 Haapsalu Street)

At the so-called end of Vana-Pärnu there was the well-known mill of Tõnis Laas. The mill was named after its owner Tõnis Laas (3rd August 1874-1st October 1935). On 25th May 1921 Tõnis Laas bought two pieces of land separated from the Sauga manor together with the buildings on the properties. The land reached from the highway until the Sauga river. Laas built a gristmill that was powered by an engine working on wood gas.



The last mill by the highway in 1936. After demolishing the mill after WWII new buildings have been built by Haapsalu Street.

Stop 9, stone monument marking the birth of Vana-Pärnu (at the gate of Vana-Pärnu cemetery)



Photo by Silvi Kanošina.

Henricus, the bishop of Ösel-Wieck wrote in 1251 that the bishopric cathedral had been built in the re-established town in the mouth of Perona (Sauga) river. The canonical rules stated that the dome church had to be located in a town. This means that Vana-Pärnu (Perona) could actually be even older. During the decade the church was built life in Perona developed quickly. The main occupations were agriculture, commerce, fishing, seal hunting, other sources of income included handcraft, inn-keeping and coasting.

In 1263 the zemaid tribe from Lithuania attacked Perona, during the attack the dome church was ruined in a fire. Only the altar cross survived the fire. In the Medieval times the cross became a profitable object of pilgrimage for Uus-Pärnu (today's town centre). To this day the cross remains on the coat of arms of Pärnu.

The citizens that survived the fire moved to Embecke order castle across the Pärnu river. The ruined Vana-Pärnu slowly re-established itself, a parish church dedicated to apostle Thomas was built in place of the dome church. This church

lasted for 300 years. Vana-Pärnu regained its town rights between 1323-37, the last knowledge of Vana-Pärnu as a separate town is from 1609.

In 1613 only five citizens had remained living around the church ruins. During late 17th century Vana-Pärnu was known as a fishing village, inhabited mainly by fishermen and boatmen. There weren't many buildings between fields and paddocks.

Vana-Pärnu got a boost of life in the 18th century when using the sea for transporting goods and building bridges across Pärnu and Sauga river sparked an interest for Vana-Pärnu in local merchants, because it provided a pass to the open sea.

In 1803 a floating bridge was built across Pärnu river. A couple of decades later a similar bridge was added across Sauga river. The bridges supported the development of Pärnu as well as Vana-Pärnu, Ülejõe and Rääma suburbs. In 1804 there were 1520 inhabitants in Pärnu and 2980 in the suburbs.

On December 6th 1920 the fast-developing fishermen's village Vana-Pärnu was added to Pärnu. If in 1962/63 there were 6700 and in 1897 there were 12,800 inhabitants in Pärnu, in 1913 there were already 22,000 people listed to live in Pärnu.

Stop 10, Jaak Kollist's leather industry (Haapsalu Street 11)

The Kollist house is one of the oldest and biggest buildings still remaining in Vana-Pärnu. It originally belonged to Heinrich Cornelius Harder, a merchant of German decent. Later it belonged to Jakob Jacke, Jaak Kollist bought the building with the land and established a leather industry there in 1924.

Processing leather in Pärnu began at the beginning of 20th century. There were four small leather industries in the town. The Kollist industry grew to be Pärnu's largest with its products valued not only locally, but also abroad. The factory was also a popular place for internship with future leather processors coming to study there from Germany and Hungary.

Kollist's son Oskar (born in 1911 in Pärnu) followed his father's footsteps, learning the trade of processing leather in Germany and doing international schooling in several foreign countries.



Photo from the book „Vana-Pärnu 750 – piiskoplinnast tänapäeva“ by S. Sarv.



Jaak Kollist

(December 10th 1866 in Karksi, Estonia – 1945 in Germany)

After graduating from school in Karksi, Kollist learnt processing leather in Ruhja and Tartu Emmereich leather factory. He began his career in Tallinn in Grünwaldt's leather industry, later doing additional schooling in Finland, Scandinavia and Germany.

Photo from the internet. He returned to Estonia in 1905 and established a leather factory in Tõrva which he moved to Pärnu the same year. He rebuilt an old petroleum storage building to be fit for processing leather in Vana-Sauga street. This building later became the so-called Baltic leather factory (later called „Kommunaar“). Kollist moved his industry to Vana-Pärnu in 1924.

Stop 11. Vana-Pärnu cemetery

Near the ruins of the former bishop's church on the bank of Sauga river by the Tallinn postal road a cemetery was established in the early 19th century. The stones from the old church were used for building the chapel and the surrounding wall.

Vana-Pärnu cemetery is the last resting place of several well-known people: one of the oldest bibliographers in Estonia **Mihkel Jürgens** (1820-1874), teachers-writers **Berend Gildenmann** (1822-1884) and **Abram Holter** (1798-1851), author **Elisabeth Aspe** (1860-1927), poets **Kersti Merilaas** (1913-1986), **August Sang** (1914-1969) and **Milla Krimm** (1894-1978), artist and teacher **Meeta Viks** (1903-1995), teacher and leader of Women's Home Defence **Elsa Lippmaa** (1908-1937), 28 participants of War of Independence and many others.



Photo by Silvi Kanošina.

Stop 12. Footbridge across Sauga river (extention of Põllu street)

Põllu street brings you from the cemetery to a footbridge. There were talks of the necessity for the bridge in Vana-Pärnu for decades. The bridge was needed to get across Sauga river to go to work, school or kindergarden. To reach the other side of the river people had to take two different buses and the commute took at least 45 minutes.

The opening of the bridge on November 2nd 1998 is a solid part of Vana-Pärnu's story.

The bridge is 75 meters long and three meters wide. The construction cost 1,85 Million kroons (~118,000 euros).



Photo from the internet.

Based on:

Silvia Sarv, Vana-Pärnu 750- piiskoplinnast tänapäevani. Pärnu, 2001

Silvia Sarv, Ordulinnast suvepealinnani. Pärnu, 1998.

Omar Volmer. Linnade halduspoliitika Eesti- ja Liivimaal 13.-20. sajandini. Pärnu 1998.

Jüri Kivimäe, Aivar Kiiska, Inna Põltsam, Aldur Vunk, Merelinn Pärnu, Pärnu 1998.

E. Parek, Pärnu sajandeis. Tallinn 1971.

Toomas Karjahärm, Vana Pärnu. Tallinn 2006.

Eesti 20 aastat iseseisvust. Tallinn, 1939.



A - J. V. Jannseni 39

1 - Siimu bridge

2 - Haapsalu Str. 5

3 - Haapsalu Str. 7

4 - Haapsalu Str. 18

**5 - Haapsalu Str. from Pärnu
river to Emajõe street**

6 - At the end of Tuulepargi Str.

7 - by Merekalda street until Mõrra street

8 - Haapsalu Str 37

9 - at the gate of Vana-Pärnu cemetery

10 - Haapsalu Str. 11

11 - Vana-Pärnu cemetery

12 - extension of Põllu Str.