



Who left these footprints here?

Footprints in Raeküla

1. Riia Street 273 - the residence of the Päts family

Raeküla has a pretty long history, the region was first mentioned as a part of Pärnu town as early as 1265. At the beginning of the 20th century instead of the suburban housing area, there was a forest with few scattered farmhouse. In 1882 builder Jakob Päts moved to Pärnu. His move played an important role in the development of Raeküla. Päts moved to Pärnu from the nearby



The Päts family: from the left Nikolai, Marianna, father Jakob, Voldemar, mother Olga, Peeter ja Konstantin. Author unknown

Tahkuranna parish with his wife Olga and five children. One of the children was to be the future first president of the Republic of Estonia, Konstantin Päts. Three years later Jakob Päts bought in excess of ten hectares of land in Raeküla between Järva and Lembitu Street. He cut the forest and divided the land into several properties. Onto some properties he had houses built that he rented out for people who had moved to Raeküla. This division into smaller properties was the beginning of today's suburbs in Raeküla.

A long-time Raeküla habitant August Edgar Peet remembers an amusing story about an unusual moving. There was a house in Järva Street that was not very strongly attached to its foundations which was typical at that time. The Raadik family lived in that house. Compared to the town government, Jakob Päts took higher rent. So, one time, a group of men were on their way home from work in the Waldhof cellulose factory, when the Raadik family got a brilliant idea – „let's move the house from Päts land to the town government land!“ All of them together lifted the house up from its foundations and carried it across the street, thus escaping the higher rent asked by Jakob Päts.

The red brick building in front of you was built in 1891. On the ground floor there was a tavern and the upper floor was rented out. Instead of Riia Street that you can see today there was a beautiful garden with a fountain in front of the house. During Soviet times the building was used by the local collective



farm, for fishermen. and at that time additional parts were added to the building. At the moment the house is a private property.

In 2011 a memorial plaque was attached to the house. In addition to Jakob and Olga Päts, it names their children, listing their contributions to society. By the end of today's journey you will also discover other ways that the Päts family influenced the development of Raeküla. Enjoy the tour !

2. Riia Street 269 - headquarters of Vaal



Fishermen in Raeküla. Foto by Leonilla Sutt Kannussaare

At the beginning of the 20th century the main source of income for the inhabitants of Raeküla was fishing. Some people worked in the Waldhof cellulose factory, the Lennuk sawmill, the Sindi broadcloth factory or the Sindi-Lodja brick factory. The fishermen were the most well-off of all tradesmen.

The fishermen's Laine Association Laine was founded in 1919. Riita Tõniste writes in the first issue of the local newspaper Raeküla Sõnumid in 2010: "At the beginning the aim of the Association was overall cultural work, mutual help in case of accidents, acquiring the supplies necessary for the fishermen, exploring the fish of Pärnu Bay and Pärnu River, adding fish to Pärnu Bay and Pärnu River, also increasing the economical well-being of the area. Regardless of the difficult post-war times, the first year of activity was successful: traps, ropes, tar, fyke fishing thread and much more was ordered from Tallinn, Germany and elsewhere. The fish were exported to foreign countries through the Association which made this the first in Estonia to have foreign partners in the field of fish trade."

The fish were kept cool in ice cellars. It is said that there were five ice cellars in Raeküla - three private cellars; one belonging to the fishermen's co-operative founded in 1931; and the other was the Laine Association's ice cellar built in 1928. Laine's cellar was situated in Haraka street between the headquarters of Vaal and the pathway to the current local kindergarten.

During the Second World War many fishermen escaped to Sweden and further afield via Sweden. The decrease in the number of fishermen influenced the fishermen's Laine Association as well. The decrease led to ending the Association's activities in 1946. A couple of years later the Vaal co-operative was founded. Vaal began its work on the basis of the statute of the fishermen's collective farm. Riia Street 269 building, also known as the headquarters of Vaal,



was one of the first new post-war buildings in Raeküla. The white building was finished in 1948.

3. Järva Street 2 - Pärnu Raeküla kindergarten



*Raeküla kindergarten in its early days.
Private photo.*

There was a kindergarten in the same building as the school that was already open in Lembitu 1, in 1931. The current Pärnu Raeküla kindergarten was opened in 1966. At that time it was called the 16th Daycare Centre of Pärnu. One of the two nursery groups was open around the clock. During the 1970's specific groups for children with speech impediments were created. Since 2004 there is one blending group for children with speech impediments and specific developmental disorders .

Visiting the kindergarten's home page it is soon realised that the surrounding environment (the river, sea, Raeküla pine woods) is actively used in the learning process, and the local community is valued. The kindergarten has several lovely traditions such as hikes in autumn and spring, a family day in cooperation with Raeküla Old School Centre, folklore mornings, celebrating national holidays with an older folk party , and a clean-up day with parents' participation, during the first week of May.

4. Järva Street 11^a - Osvald Saulep

Tea Kurvits writes in Kultuur ja Elu: "Osvald Saulep was born in Kehtna, Harjumaa in 1925. He remembers he was rather young when his grandfather noticed his increasing interest in drawing and taught Saulep to depict animals on the board. During his school years Osvald was asked to show the others how to draw. It seems natural that Osvald later wished to study art and painting. His plans were cut short by the war. Instead of the brush Saulep picked up a gun." The article describes Saulep's endeavours during the second World War, his post-war bushwhacker's life and forced labour days. Kurvits continues: „After establishing a home in Pärnu, he entered Tartu Art school distance learning division in 1959. He graduated in 1964, receiving a diploma for painting and graphic art. His childhood dream had come true.“



Osvald Saulep finishing a piece of art in his home studio. Photo by Silvi Kanošina



Silvi Kanošina's remarks on the interview at the Saulep residence at Järva Street 11^a for Raeküla Sõnumid nr 3 also portrays his love for art.

Already on the front wall one can notice a white swan decorating the house, in the foyer the guests are greeted by a wall mosaic compiled of pieces of ceramics on the topic of the adventures of Lembitu, an Estonian folk hero. Even though the artist used several different techniques (graphic art, linocutting, oil painting, water painting...), using Saulep's own words he „still had a scrap with sculpture“. Regardless of that revelation the bathroom wall is decorated by a mermaid and several small sculptures reside by the pond in the garden.

„I like to paint, I want to continue painting,“ said the artist to Tea Kurvits. Saulep has made over two hundred works in different genres. There are many



For the big catch, 1982, oil

landscape and nude paintings, also portraits of significant Estonian militarists and country leaders. By the way, the portrait of Konstantin Päts that decorates Raeküla Old School centre is painted by our own local artist Osvald Saulep. Saulep passed away in June 2016.

In addition to painting, Saulep sang in the Pärnu military choir led by his life partner Helle Kullamaa for many years.

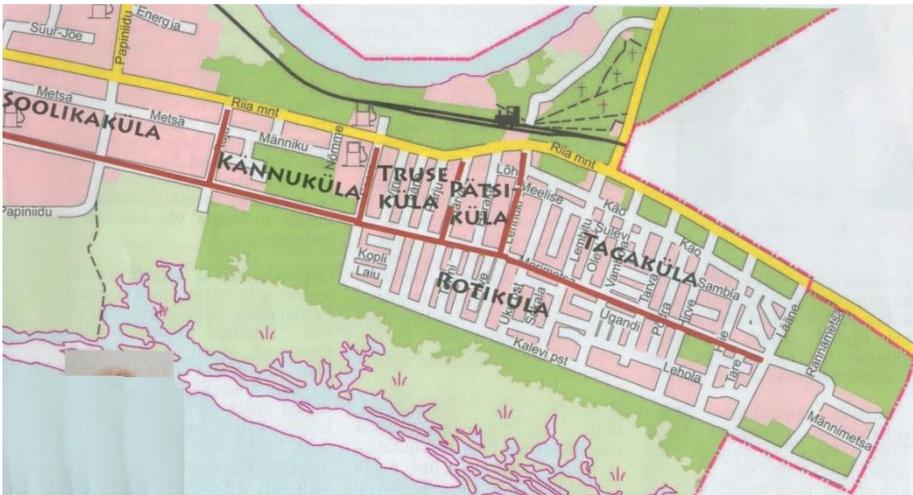
5. Kalevi Street 34 – lines, villages and legends

The next street up to Riia Street is called Lennuki, just as the sawmill that was situated more or less at the end of the same street. Today's names were given to Raeküla's streets in the 1960's by museum employees. Thus it is not surprising that Lennuki is followed by Uku, Lembitu, Vambola etc. These are the names of Estonian folk heroes. Before being named by the museum employees, Raeküla's streets were called lines. There were 12 lines altogether. For example, nowadays Lembitu Street was called Line no 2.

Perhaps you have heard that Raeküla is also called Rotiküla (Rat's Village). To be more exact, Rotiküla is only this part of Raeküla you are currently walking in. Raeküla was in fact divided into six „villages“. The land formerly owned by Jakob Päts between present Lembitu and Järva Street were called Pätsi küla, from there towards the town centre until Saare Street was Truše küla, also named after a land owner. From Saare Street to Raja Street lay Kännuküla (Stump village). Since the high buildings of the Mai area had not yet been built, the area up to the present A.H. Tammsaare Street was all considered Raeküla. The strip between Metsa and Riia Street was called Soolikaküla (Bowels village). From



Pätsi küla towards Riga lay Tagaküla (Hind or back village) and the part between Merimetsa Street and the sea – was the infamous Rotiküla.



A map of Raeküla based on information from the early decades of last century. Private photo

There are several legends to explain why Rotiküla is called Rat's Village. These are the most common:

- a) Once upon a time the mayor of Pärnu came to check out what was going on at the suburbs. He saw crops growing and huts with turf roofs. Surprised, he shouted: „You have made your nests here as quickly as rats!“ The locals who heard it began to call their home Rotiküla as a joke.
- b) The second legend speaks of a shopkeeper who went to the big merchant Ammende in order to refill his store. Upon reaching Ammende the shopkeeper noticed a rat with something shiny in its mouth slip into an old wooden „ pipe pump“ of a well. The shopkeeper got curious, and despite the obvious surprise and disbelief of Ammende, he bought the pipe. The pipe was full of fortune that the rat had stolen and carried in there ! The shopkeeper sold the treasure, bought some land in Raeküla and built a beautiful house. As the money has come from the rat, this place was from thereon called Rotiküla.
- c) A shorter version of the story speaks of a farmer who saw a rat holding some money in its mouth escape into a pipe near Jeruusalemma tavern. The tavern was situated more or less at the end of present Saare street which is now a petrol station. The farmer went to check the pipe out and found a treasure inside, which he, of course, took away. The rat was so sad to lose its fortune that it hung itself in the nearby woods.
- d) The last legend also ends with hanging a rat. The story takes place at the time when the future president Päts's father Jakob owned a tavern. Some of the city boys visited the tavern and of course they fancied the rosy cheeked suburban girls. Local fishermen's sons, however, did not take too kindly that city boys were taking their girls, so naturally they chased the city boys back to the centre. The humiliation of the defeat angered the city



boys so much that once upon finding a huge rat they brought it to Raeküla and hung it to a tree by the tavern so all of the travellers could see. Hanging the rat made the city boys feel a little bit better, but the name Rotiküla stuck to Raeküla. By the way, when angered, some people will curse: „Those damn ratvillagers!“

Choose your favourite legend and tell others about it!

6. Lembitu Street 55 – Gunnar Aarma

„The last by the sea“ – so the famous house that hosted many visitors and received many letters in its time was called. Every taxi driver that was working during Gunnar Aarma’s Pärnu-period knew the Aarma house. Healer and esoteric writer Aarma hosted fasting hikes during the late 1970’s. Those hikes were sometimes also called hunger hikes; they did however bring together people from Pärnu and further away. The life of Aarma was difficult. He grew up in Tallinn and spent many years in Russia having been deported there with his family. After returning to Estonia, Aarma moved to Pärnu where he built a house in Raeküla. It was the last house in Lembitu Street for a long time – thus the nickname stated at the beginning. Aarma mainly worked as a music teacher. In 2001. Silja Joon wrote in Pärnu Postimees: “Gunnar Aarma was the most well-known for his healing methods and wise advice, however his interesting trips and exclusive meetings with prominent people before World War II deserve no less attention. For example, he had met Hemingway as well as Franco’s wife and even Hitler himself, just to mention a few of the famous people Aarma had the chance to meet eye-to-eye.”



Minu isa
GUNNAR AARMA

Aarma has written and published several books and articles, Maria Tilk, Aarma’s daughter has given account of his biography in the book „My father Gunnar Aarma“. Ingvar Luhaäär has compiled a compendium based on his interviews with Aarma. The last years of his life before passing away in 2001 Aarma spent in Tallinn.

Photo from the internet

7. Merimetsa Street 64 (behind the house in Lembitu Street) – the fire brigade’s square

Social and communal life has always been active in Raeküla. The school building at Lembitu 1 slowly turned into a cultural centre where – especially in the 1930’s



– profitable dance evenings and concerts were held, a theatre group practiced, gymnastics competitions were held, a jazz ensemble practiced and many more activities took place. In 1924 the Red Cross Youth organization and club „Lootus“ were founded, there were also sports association „Tervis“, health association „Vaprus“, youth association „Koit“ and unions „Noored Kotkad“ and „Kodutütred“.

Thus it is not surprising that in 1924 the Pärnu Volunteer Firefighting Association, Raeküla division began its work. At first the fire station was situated on the corner of present Merimetsa and Olevi Street, but in 1939 a new department building was built on the corner of Merimetsa and Lembitu Street.

August Edgar Peet shared his memories in 2018: „There was this square, still is, where outdoor parties were held. On the corner of Merimetsa and Lembitu there was the fire station building, with a tower where the firemen practiced climbing up and down and where the fire hoses were laid to dry. And then there was the garage and the truck. Inside the house there was a flat, with a telephone inside. My grandmother on my father’s side was a guard there. When a fire broke loose she activated the siren which resounded through the whole of Raeküla. Then the driver and the firemen ran out together and drove out to extinguish the fire.“

A life-long inhabitant of Raeküla, Eili Laanela had noted that the fire brigade was an important promoter of local cultural and social life. There was a tradition of spring and autumn parties. At these parties the firemen demonstrated their skills and invited men from the audience to try out their strength.

Nowadays the station building with a tower has been replaced by a detached house, the square behind the house in Lembitu Street that the locals call the Linden park, due to the linden trees planted there, is still visible. It is said that the firemen who planted the trees had put notes with their names under the trees while planting.



Brass band of Raeküla firefighters, 1935. Photo by Leonilla Sutt Kannussaar

8. Kalevi Street 82 – Margus’s net shop

Do you notice the wooden sculpture in the front yard of Margus’s shop that depicts a rat and a perch? This piece of art is made by Urmas Margus. The perch



symbolizes the importance of fishing in Raeküla and also that catching perches was one of the most profitable jobs. The rat, of course, symbolizes Rotiküla (Rat's Village).

Throughout history, the sea has been vastly important for Raeküla – for decades it provided food on the table, and work for people. Today the beach attracts locals as well as holiday makers from further away. At the end of the extension of the nearby Hirve Street a beach with a small parking lot and a line of sand awaits the bathers. Those who love nature are greeted by the bird watching tower, used in all seasons.

Look towards the sea and imagine that not more than half a century ago instead of the present forest-park there was a cattle range where local people herded their cows. In fact, during those times there were households similar to farms with farm animals and growing crops instead of today's private houses in Raeküla. The detached houses with their small beautiful gardens were mostly built during the 1960's.

The animals kept here were pigs, chickens, cows, sometimes sheep. Every fisherman's family had a horse that helped carry the boat and the load, also move the fishermen on ice during the winter. A long-time habitant of Raeküla, Ilmar Mänd remembers the time after World War II: „There were three big cattles herds here. These cows belonged to the locals. Two people herded the cows at the same time. The owner of each cow had to provide a herdsman after a certain period of time. Either they went themselves or they sent their children, this is how the cycle worked.“ His wife Inga adds that at a certain time of day the cattle came home on their own accord. Ilmar Mänd confirms this:“ The herdsman had no problem at all. The animals came down one street. The herdsman didn't know which cow was whose. The drove of cows thundered down the street but each every cow always found its own house.“ Ilmar has been a herdsman himself.



Beef cattle eating grass on Raeküla meadows in 2013 with local children befriending them. Photo by Liivi Kaasik



9. Merimetsa Street 96 – Sepa square



A volleyball match on August 20th 2006 at a town celebration on Sepa square. Photo by Liivi Kaasik

On the corner of Merimetsa and Hirve Street there is the Sepa (in English: Smith's) square that has been named after the Sepa farm next to it. Similar to the fire brigade's square and the school building, Sepa square was a place of social activity. Leonilla Sutt Kannussaar writes in Raeküla Sõnumid no 7: „The most beautiful midsummer bonfire with the firemen's brass band and a confetti stand was at Sepa square.“

Since every household had a patch of farm land in addition to the farm animals, every autumn a threshing machine was ordered by the community. People came together to Sepa square to do the threshing.

The owner of Sepa farm, Peeter Jantson writes in Raeküla Sõnumid no 10: „In its time Sepa farm was very famous and lively. Not only utility tools were made there, they also compiled hunting rifles. In addition to that the local theatre group practiced there. The performances were held on the Sepa square next to the farm. Somebody remembered that they were sitting in the fourth sector in seat 123. It must have been some theatre!“

In 1995 Sepa farm was taken under protection, as the only fully remaining 19th century fisherman's farm in Pärnu.

10. Hirve Street 11 – Elfriede Nikolai

The house at Hirve 11 was the home of folk dance teacher Elfriede Nikolai for a long time. Elfriede, who is from Tartu county, has been given many honours, among them the Carl Robert Jakobson prize; also the annual prize from the Cultural Endowment of Estonia and she won the Pärnu town badge of Merit as well. In 2006 Nikolai received the V class

Order of the White Star from President Rüütel.



Folk dance group Kägara together with the Steffenso family dancers at Pärnumaa Pirandil in 1993. Standing left in the first row is Elfriede Nikolai. Private photo



Elfriede Nikolai has been a distinguished and legendary promoter of folk dancing and folk culture in Pärnu. She worked in Pärnu Koidula Gümnaasium (a local high school) for more than 30 years where her pupils grew into the well-known dance group Kägara. She also worked in the local Raeküla school, sharing her dancing passion with our local pupils as well.

Her remarkable contribution is being the creator of Pärnu county children's folk dancing festival. Nikolai is also well-known as the director, host and organiser of „Pärnumaa pirand“ concerts. The groups directed by her have performed in numerous folk festivals, among which are the Estonian folk dancing festival and performances in Poland, Norway, Finland, Sweden, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary and Germany.

11. Käo Street 4 – Pärnu Raeküla school

March 24th 1913 when the Lembitu 1 old school began its work is considered the beginning of education in Raeküla. The school continued its work until spring 1979, in autumn the school was added to the new Lydia Koidula nimeline II keskkool and moved away from Raeküla. Even though education did not completely vanish from Raeküla (after 1979 the art school, economics school, adult education and even Pärnu College of University of Tartu who used the main building and the „small house“ built next to the old school), provision of elementary and basic education had to wait until 1991 when the new school building was opened at Käo Street 4.

In the late 1980's the town government had to choose between building a new hospital or a new school. Due to the overpopulation of the rest of Pärnu's schools money was granted for a new school and the hospital had to wait its turn for a while. Raeküla school started out as a high school, was later renamed Raeküla Gümnaasium and since 2010 serves as a basic school.

Raeküla school has been known for its focus topics, which at the beginning were economy and culture, in high school. Nowadays it is possible to learn in a sports-oriented class.



The school's web page states cooperation, traditions, caring and creativity as their main values.

Laine Tõnisson has written a hymn for Raeküla school. In the hymn she honours the more than 100-year-old tradition of education in Raeküla,

Pärnu Raeküla Gümnaasium 1.09.2001. Pupils, teachers and others gathering for a parade to Mai centree. Photo by Riita Tõniste



which you can learn more about at the next point.

12. Lembitu Street 1 – Raeküla school

On the initiative of Voldemar Päts and August Luts, Pärnu Eesti Kooliselts (Pärnu Estonian School Society) had its birth at a meeting in the Päts residence garden in 1911. The biggest accomplishment of the society was founding a school in Raeküla. Konstantin Päts went to Riga in order to get the permit for founding a school. The school building was finished in 1912. However the opening of the school had to wait until March 24th 1913, due to the lack of teachers. At the beginning there were only 60 pupils and two teachers.

The beginning was harsh – the impact of the First World War left the school in a dire financial situation. In the 1920's school parties with an entrance fee began to be held, the profit of which was used to purchase school books and necessary equipment.

During the 1930's the school became the centre of social life. It stayed that way for a long time.

There are several memories of the school years during the Second World War told by the previous pupils of Raeküla school. In general the school years are remembered as a fun time of mischief with classmates (boys as well as girls!). For example the colourful story shared by Eili Laanela: „In the morning we were told there would be a doctor and we would get vaccination shots. Our class was solidly united, so we thought - we won't stand for the injections, we will run away! One or two cowards weren't willing to run away, as they would get punished. But the rest of the class... we did just that ! During the break we quietly took our bags and belongings and as soon as the bell rang, we sprinted out of the door. There, where the graveyard is now situated, used to be a nice forest and a meadow back then. So we went to the forest and we had a wonderful day. It was a beautiful day, the sun was shining and somebody had brought a ball and we had lots of fun. I know that only four pupils remained in the classroom, they were the „teacher's pets“. So we spent our time in the meadow until lunch when it was time to go home. The next day when we arrived at school we heard that the doctor hadn't



The old school building in 1930. Private photo



come at all the previous day. Well, of course our masterplan wouldn't have worked twice. However, they weren't able to punish the whole class either. So, the next day we all got our injections anyway."

At different times the pupils of the school have accomplished remarkable results in woodwork (led by teacher Sergei Menšikov) and in sports (led by teacher Vello Vilipere).

The school also had its own garden, in which vegetables were grown. The pupils often helped the headmaster to take care of the garden – water the plants and pick the weeds. When the elementary school building was built in 1962 (nowadays Lembitu 1a) the school garden was moved a little bit further away, to the corner of Lembitu and Merimetsa streets.

In the 1970 it was found that the half-a-century old school building was worn out and dangerous. By the end of the decade the school was amalgamated with the new Lydia Koidula nimeline II keskkool. In time the usage of the building decreased and after the reindependence of Estonia, the house was left empty.

Around the beginning of the new century a group of active people of Raeküla took it as their objective to rekindle the old school building to life. The long journey has brought to us the situation that nowadays the old building hosts a community centre. Raeküla Vanakooli keskus (Raeküla Old School centre) bears the legacy of the initial function of the Lembitu 1 building in its name. The learning (hobby school and training centre) and social aspects (cultural events, exhibitions, hobby activities, youth center) are still alive. You are welcome to step in!

Based on:

Interviews with August Edgar Peet, Eili Laanela, Ilmar Mänd

Raeküla Sõnumid nr 1, 3, 5, 7, 10, 11, 15

Sigrid Pärn – research paper „Merimetsa tänava ajalugu“

Maria Tilk – book „Minu isa Gunnar Aarma“

Raeküla school's webpage raekyla.parnu.ee

Raeküla kindergarten's webpage raekula.parnu.ee

Urmas Saard – article on Maaleht's blog „Urmas Margus: et mäletada Raeküla rannakalureid“

Tea Kurvits – article in the magazine Kultuur ja Elu „Osvald Saulep. Kunstnikuhing sõjakeerises.“

Jäljed Raekülas

Kas need jäljed siia jättes,
2019 kas neid jälgi mõnda kätst?



Kaardi põhjana on kasutatud Delfi kaarti

Leia rohkem infot Raekülas toimuva kohta www.raekylavanakool.ee

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Leia Raeküla jäljed www.raekylavanakool.ee/jaljed või

