

# bridges



LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

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*Dear Members of the Lithuanian-American Community,*

*With the Christmas holiday season approaching, we would like to thank you for all your efforts to honor Lithuania and to reinforce the feeling of community and pride in our ethnic heritage. Even your smallest efforts strengthen our Community, and leave an indelible mark in the history of keeping our Lithuanian ethnicity alive while living away from Lithuania.*

*During this Holy Season, we wish you inner peace, harmony, wisdom and light. May this spread from heart to heart, unifying us all, children of one nation.*

*Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.*

*The Lithuanian-American Community Executive Committee*



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Photo: Loreta Timukienė



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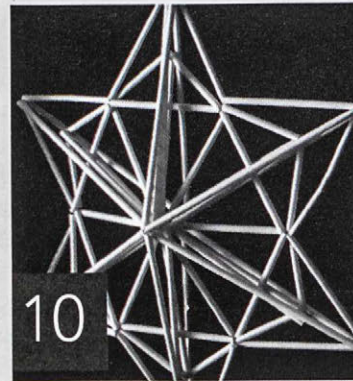
## contents



**Living the Dream**  
LISS student interns live  
and work in Lithuania  
by *Lina Beržinskas*



**May God Grant That We Are  
All Together Next Year**  
An excerpt from "Between  
Shades of Gray"  
by *Ruta Sepetys*



**Šiaudinukai: Traditional  
Lithuanian Straw Ornaments**  
A history and how-to  
by *Teresé Vekteris*

## Departments

**2 from the editor**

**12 a taste of lithuania**

'Twas the Night Before Kalėdos:  
The Kūčios Table  
by *Christiana Noyalas*

**14 lac news**

Philadelphia's Mugè

**16 genealogy tips & tricks**

Naturalization Papers: The  
Holy Grail of Information  
by *Richard Gostautas*

**18 current events**

**21 calendar**

**Cover:** Cathedral Square in Vilnius dressed for Christmas. Photo: Aleksas Kvedoras, iStock  
**Back cover:** A šiaudinukas (straw ornament) created by members of the New York chapter  
of the Lithuanian Folk Art Institute. Photo: Walter A. Sidas



from the editor



My brother (left) and I in the days when Christmas meant little more than a pile of toys under the tree

## Meaning Beyond Things

My brother and I would approach our Christmas lists with the seriousness of a homework assignment.

The kitchen table would be cleared, and down we'd sit, the Sears Wish Book between us. We'd study each page, carefully transcribing the names of the desired items, making sure to reference the page number in case there was any question. Then we'd go back over the list, trimming (just a little), prioritizing, then rewriting, small and neat, to fit on a single page, as if that would somehow indicate we weren't all that greedy.

Some years I got what my heart most desired—the chemistry set was probably seen as educational. Sometimes I didn't—the rock tumbler was deemed too noisy and a waste of electricity.

Thankfully, I've gained a little more maturity over the years. These days, I'm more focused on how to make the holiday more meaningful for my family, especially my niece and nephews. They get gifts, of course, but among the presents are coupons for days spent together, items that belonged to my parents (and the stories that go with them), foods that my grandmother taught me to make.

If you're looking for a meaningful season, let the pages of this issue be your wish book:

- Why not give your college student the gift of two months in Lithuania? Read about internships in Vilnius and Kaunas beginning on page 3.
- Consider a book or novel about Lithuania. Read an excerpt from a fine example of the genre, *Between Shades of Gray* (not to be confused with *Fifty Shades of Grey*), beginning on page 6.
- Hand-made gifts are often the most treasured. Learn how to make traditional Lithuanian straw ornaments on page 11, and whip up a few of these unique stocking-stuffers on your own.

Most importantly, give your family the gift of time spent together during this most spiritual of seasons. If you celebrate Christmas, why not gather for *Kučios*, the traditional Lithuanian Christmas Eve celebration? Read about the origins of the feast on page 12, and set a table for the evening using the sample menu and recipes.

However you mark the season, I wish you a full heart and inner light.

In peace,

Teresė Vekteris, Editor





The 2012 Lithuanian-speaking interns in Vilnius.

By *Lina Beržinskas*

As the cold winter lurks right around the corner, warm memories of a summer in Lithuania still linger in the hearts of some lucky American and Canadian students. The Lithuanian International Student Services (LISS) Internship Program successfully completed its fourth round of providing internship opportunities to college students and recent graduates. The program provided internships for 21 American and Canadian students in a variety of Lithuanian workplaces—in both the private and public sectors—according to the students' interests and chosen college majors. Fifteen students lived and worked in Vilnius, and six students lived and worked in Kaunas, where in addition to working, they attended Lithuanian language courses.

The day-to-day reality of living and working in Lithuania was colored by a variety of new experiences and cultural introductions. Among the new friends and feelings enriching the lives of the students was an undertone of a spiritual re-connection to the land—the land of their ancestors. Students found solace in the beauty of the Lithuanian forests and coastline, and gathered inspiration from

the castles and historical monuments while travelling the cobblestone streets to work every day.

Antanas Mockus, a Rutgers University chemical engineering student, completed his internship at “UAB techniniai projektai” (technical projects). When asked to describe his work day, Antanas wrote, “Every day there are different assignments. I work together with another LISS

student, Marius Bernier. We use Excel and PDF files to analyze blueprints from the Jubaid Export Refinery or Company 4 and Vilniaus Energija. Our responsibility was to check over our colleagues' work and to fix mistakes. I am really happy they let us work with this important information. I am glad this company trusts us to let us fix their mistakes.” Toward the end of the internship, Marius and Antanas



LISS students watching and listening to their fellow interns present their projects.





Irena Balzeckas, an intern at Vilnius University Hospital, presents her cumulative project.

got a chance to visit a factory whose blueprints they worked on. They travelled to Druskininkai and saw the practical application of the engineering work they did all summer. Having completed the internship successfully, Antanas was offered a freelance job by "UAB techniniai projektai." He now translates and works with English blueprints while continuing his junior year at home in America.

The summer internship in Lithuania led to a job not just for Antanas. LISS student Paulius Vertelka's summer in Lithuania also blossomed into a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Paulius graduated from the University of Illinois at Chicago with a degree in economics and politics this year. Having come to the U.S. with his family as an adolescent, Paulius never lost a connection with his homeland.

Lithuanian television viewers also got a chance to see Paulius's love for his homeland and internship experience when he was featured in a Lithuanian TV program introducing the winners of a contest "Kurk Lietuvoje" ("Create in Lithuania"). This project, supported by the Lithuanian government, sought to gather young, educated leaders of Lithuania to breathe new ideas into a changing economic climate. When asked to gather his thoughts on the internship experience, Paulius wrote, "During the LISS Internship Program I understood that Lithuania is full of opportunities. The city of Vilnius is bustling and is full of the most interest-

ing and dynamic people with whom one can network and create incredible contacts. In this sense, [my internship at] "Investuok Lietuvoje" (Invest in Lithuania) provides the formality for me to represent myself as an active person. The LISS program has become an interesting discussion topic for my new colleagues, and therefore I am endlessly thankful for the opportunity to be in Vilnius and to be happy."

By interning at "Investuok Lietuvoje," Paulius gained valuable experience that helped him secure a position with the "Kurk Lietuvoje" project. He will remain in Lithuania for at least one year, and utilize all of his organizational and creative talents with his internship experience and contacts to help actualize the goal of creating new businesses in Lithuania.

The LISS program also gave Indrė Sabaliunaitė a chance to create interesting contacts during her two-month internship at the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Indrė, an international relations and public relations graduate student from Ohio, seemed to be the perfect fit within this ministry. Having completed her undergrad work at The Ohio State University, Indrė currently attends the University of Pittsburgh pursuing her master's degree. When asked to describe her most interesting summer assignments from the Ministry, she wrote, "Although other people think this is one of the most boring assignments, it

was one of the most interesting projects I did. The project was related to writing cooperative agreements. It was very interesting to read about the legal framework within an agreement and to see how an agreement becomes reality; how theory becomes actuality. It was interesting to learn how many people contribute to an agreement's passage. I am very thankful to my supervisor, Bertas Venckaitis, for the opportunity to participate in a variety of projects, and for his invitations to participate in various events. My internship at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs inspired me to continue my active involvement for the good of Lithuania and to be proud I am Lithuanian!"

Indrė, like Paulius and Antanas, was born in Lithuania and came to America while still a child. Of the 15 students completing their internships in Vilnius, half (eight) were born in Lithuania and the other half (seven) were born in America.

Aleksas Sadauskas was born in America. Aleksas, 19, is a biochemistry major from Bradley University. After finishing his bachelor's degree, Aleksas plans to study medicine. Aleksas wrote of his summer experience, "Lithuania is my homeland and the homeland of both of my parents. It is the most beautiful and perfect place in the world. There is no lack of nature. One could never find such sights in America. I came to Lithuania to be a part of the LISS Internship Program. I rarely visit Lithuania. I live with other students in Vilnius and work at the Vilnius Emergency Hospital, in the Orthopedic and Trauma unit. All of the doctors are very nice. They explain what is happening during a surgery, and even move over during an operation so I can get a better look. Although the hospitals in Lithuania are different than the hospitals in America, there are still a lot of similarities. During the LISS internship I met many new American-Lithuanians, and am really satisfied with the experience I received."

Experience in a Lithuanian hospital impacted not just Aleksas, but also Indrė Vyšniauskaitė. Indrė, from California, interned with Aleksas and other students in the hospital. Indrė is a biology



(pre-med) major from the University of California-Irvine. This summer was her first experience in an operating room. Remembering her first impressions, Indrė wrote, "This week I saw my first operation. It was probably the hardest day for me in the hospital. I came to this internship not knowing if I would enjoy medicine, and if I would want to continue studying to be a doctor. But on that Monday, I was convinced that this is really an interesting field and that I can overcome the obstacles related to medicine. In the beginning I wasn't sure how I would feel and react to what goes on during an operation. Then, when they began to "open" a person's head, instead of feeling fear, I was mesmerized at how the doctors were operating. It was so interesting that every day I wait for another chance to see an operation. This internship was an excellent way for me to find myself and help me realize what fields interest me."

The summer internship in Lithuania provided students with a variety of new experiences, interesting new contacts, and professional and personal challenges. For some graduates, this time served as a bridge between the comfortable student lifestyle and the realities of an adult's world. For others, the internship served as a trial run in their chosen field (business, history, accounting, environmental studies, journalism, education, finance, politics). Without a doubt, one can surmise that the work the students completed strengthened not only their educational experience, but also their connections to their Lithuanian backgrounds.

Another unique aspect of this program is that non-Lithuanian-speaking students may also have an internship experience. These students wind up not only working but receiving the beginnings of Lithuanian language instruction by taking courses and being able to use their lessons immersed in daily Lithuanian life. Lithuanian workplaces look forward to accepting LISS students because, as they put it, it is a chance for them to practice their English and learn about the American culture through the eyes of our students. At the same time, it is a valuable

opportunity for the students to practice their Lithuanian language, with all its complexities and nuances, in real time.

Without moral and financial support, the LISS Internship Program would not be possible. We thank The Lithuanian Foundation, which from the early beginnings of the program provided support to this project. The financial support alleviates some of the financial burden for students, so every student can live and work in Lithuania independent of their families' economic situation. Special thanks to the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for recognizing the importance of providing Lithuanian youth living abroad accessibility to maintain a connection to their homeland. Every year the Ministry invites the internship group for discussions, and funds several cultural excursions. Canadian program participants are sponsored by the Canadian Lithuanian Foundation, and so we are thankful for their support.

The LISS program administrators are thankful for all who understand the importance of the program's mission—thankful to the Lithuanian businesses, hospitals and ministries who have agreed to work with our program, and thankful to the individuals within these workplaces who develop personal connections and enrich the lives of their interns. On completing the internship program, participants commonly respond that what

## Lithuanian International Student Services

### Summer 2013 Internship Program

Application Deadline

February 1, 2013

For more information:

[www.lithuanianinternships.com](http://www.lithuanianinternships.com)

[Lissprograma@gmail.com](mailto:Lissprograma@gmail.com)

they learned and experienced in Lithuania is "more than they could have imagined." The enthusiasm and appreciation we feel validates and proves the success and importance of providing a summer opportunity for students to experience life in their ancestors' land while adding valuable experience to their resumé.

For more information, please visit the LISS website, [lithuanianinternships.com](http://lithuanianinternships.com). We are currently accepting applications for the 2013 summer program with a deadline of February 1, 2013. Donations to LISS can be sent to "LISS Program/LAC," c/o Rasa Ardytė-Juškienė (LISS Director), 1212 Mohegan Road, Manasquan, N.J. 08736-1650. Questions or comments: [Lissprograma@gmail.com](mailto:Lissprograma@gmail.com).

*Lina Beržinskas participated in the first LISS summer of 2009, interning at the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania. As of the summer of 2012, Lina is devoting her time as LISS assistant director.*



The 2012 LISS interns ready to embark on their summer adventure.





## God grant us that we are all together again next year

*In 1941, 15-year-old Lina is preparing for art school, first dates and all that summer has to offer. But one night the Soviet secret police barge violently into her home, deporting her along with her mother and brother.*

They are being sent to Siberia. Lina's father has been separated from the family and sentenced to death in a prison camp. Lina, her mother, brother and their fellow deportees spend their first Christmas in exile in Altai in Siberia.

*The following chapters are excerpts from the novel Between Shades of Gray by Ruta Sepetys, copyright © 2011 by Ruta Sepetys. Used by permission of Philomel Books, a division of Penguin Group (USA) Inc.*

### Chapter 50

IT TOOK TWO WEEKS for Jonas to improve. His legs trembled when he walked. His voice was barely more than a whisper. In the meantime, Mother and I became weaker. We had to split our two bread rations to feed Jonas. At first, when we asked, people contributed a portion of what they had. But as cold crept deeper into our shacks, it began to chill generosity. One day, I saw Miss Grybas turn

her back and shoved her entire bread ration into her mouth the moment it was handed to her. I couldn't blame her. I had often thought of doing the same thing. Mother and I didn't ask for contributions after that.

Despite our pleadings, the NKVD refused to give us food for Jonas. Mother even tried speaking to the commander. He laughed at her. He said something that upset her for days. We had nothing left to sell. We had bartered practically everything we owned with the Altaians for warm clothing. The lining of Mother's coat hung thin, like fluttering cheesecloth

The approach of Christmas bolstered spirits. We gathered in each other's shacks to reminisce about the holidays in Lithuania. We talked endlessly about Kucios, our Christmas Eve celebration. We decided that Kucios would be held in the bald man's shack. He grudgingly agreed.

We closed our eyes when listening to the descriptions of the twelve delicious

dishes representing the twelve apostles. People rocked back and forth, nodding. Mother talked of her delicious poppy seed soup and cranberry pudding. Mrs. Rimas cried at the mention of the wafer and traditional Christmas blessing, "God grant us that we are all together again next year."

The guards warmed themselves with drink after work. They often forgot to check on us or didn't want to venture out into the biting, frosty winds. We gathered each night to hear about someone's holiday celebration. We grew to know each other through our longings and cherished memories. Mother insisted that we invite the grouchy woman to our meetings. She said that just because she had signed didn't mean she wasn't homesick. Snow fell and the temperatures plummeted, but work and the cold felt tolerable. We had something to look forward to—a small ritual that brought relief to our gray days and dark nights.

I had begun to steal logs to keep the



stove fired. Mother constantly worried, but I assured her I was careful and that the NKVD were too lazy to come out into the cold. One night, I left the bald man's shack to get a log for the stove. I crept around his shack. I heard movement and froze. Someone was standing in the shadows. Was it Kretzsky? My heart stopped... Was it the commander?

"It's just me, Lina."

I heard Andrius's voice in the darkness. He struck a match and lit a cigarette, briefly illuminating his face.

"You scared me," I said. "Why are you standing out here?"

"I listen from out here."

"Why don't you come inside? It's freezing," I said.

"They wouldn't want me inside. It's not fair. Everyone is so hungry."

"That's not true. We'd be happy to have you. We're just talking about Christmas."

"I know. I've heard. My mother begs me to bring her the stories each night."

"Really? If I hear about cranberry pudding one more time, I'll go crazy," I said, smiling. "I just need to get some wood."

"You mean steal some?" he said.

"Well, yes, I guess," I said.

He shook his head, chuckling. "You're really not scared, are you?"

"No," I said. "I'm cold." He laughed.

"Do you want to walk with me?" I asked.

"Nah, I better get back," he said. "Be careful. Good night."

Three days later Mrs. Arvydas and Andrius arrived with a bottle of vodka. The crowd fell silent when they walked through the door. Mrs. Arvydas wore stockings. Her hair was clean and curled. Andrius looked down. He stuffed his hands in his pockets. I didn't care that she wore a clean dress and wasn't hungry. No one wanted to trade places with her.

"A toast," said Mother, lifting the bottle of vodka to Mrs. Arvydas. "To good friends."

Mrs. Arvydas smiled and nodded. Mother took a small sip from the bottle and then shimmied at the hips, delighted. We all joined in, taking small sips and laughing together, savoring the moment. Andrius leaned back against the wall,

watching us and grinning.

That night, I fantasized about Papa joining us for the holiday. I imagined him trudging through the falling snow toward Altai, arriving in time for Christmas with my handkerchief in his breast pocket. Hurry, Papa, I urged. Please hurry.

~

*"Don't worry, Lina, he'll be here soon," said Mother. "He's getting hay for the table."*

*I stood at the window, looking out into the snow.*

*Jonas helped Mother in the dining room. "So we'll have twelve courses tomorrow. We'll be eating all day." He smacked his lips.*

*Mother smoothed the white tablecloth over the dining room table.*

*"Can I sit next to Grandma?" asked Jonas.*

*Papa's dark silhouette emerged on the street before I could protest and argue that I wanted to sit next to Grandma.*

*"He's coming," I shouted. I grabbed my coat. I ran down the front steps and stood in the middle of the street. The small dark figure grew taller as it appeared through the low light of dusk and the curtain of falling snow. A tinkling of bells from a horse's harness floated from the street over.*

*I heard his voice before I could make out his face. "Now, what sort of sensible girl stands in the middle of the road when it's snowing?"*

*"Only one whose father is late," I teased.*

*Papa's face appeared, frosty and red. He carried a small bundle of hay.*

*"I'm not late," he said, putting his arm around me. "I'm right on time."*

## Chapter 51

CHRISTMAS EVE ARRIVED. I worked all day chopping wood. Moisture from my nose froze, encrusted around my nostrils. I kept my mind busy, trying to remember details about each Christmas at home. No one swallowed their bread rations in line that night. We greeted each other kindly and made our way back to our shacks. Jonas looked somewhat like himself again. We washed our hair in melted snow and scrubbed at our finger-

nails. Mother pinned her hair up and dotted lipstick on her lips. She rubbed a bit of the red into my cheeks for color.

"It's not perfect, but we do the best we can," said Mother, adjusting our clothes and hair.

"Get the family picture," said Jonas.

The others had the same idea. Photographs of families and loved ones were plentiful in the bald man's shack. I saw a photo of Mrs. Rimas and her husband. He was short, like her. She was laughing in the photo. She looked so different, strong. Now she drooped, like someone sucked the air out of her. The bald man was particularly quiet.



We sat on the floor as if around a table. There was a white cloth in the center with hay and fir boughs in front of each person. One spot was left empty. A stub of tallow burned in front of it. Lithuanian tradition called for an empty place to be left at the table for family members who were gone or deceased. People placed photographs of their family and friends around the empty seat. I gently set our family photo at the empty setting.

I took out the bundle of food I had been saving and placed it on the table. Some people had small surprises—a potato that they had saved or something they had pilfered. The grouchy woman displayed some biscuits she must have bought in the village. Mother thanked her and made a fuss.

"The Arvydas boy and his mother sent this," said the bald man. "For after dinner." He tossed something out. It landed with a thud. People gasped. I couldn't









believe it. It was chocolate. Real chocolate! And the bald man hadn't eaten it.

Jonas whooped.

"Shh...Jonas. Not too loud," said Mother. She looked at the package on the table. "Chocolate! How wonderful. Our cup runneth over."

The bald man put the bottle of vodka on the table.

"Now, you know better," scolded Miss Grybas. "Not for Kucios."

"How the hell should I know?" snapped the bald man. "I'm Jewish."

Everyone looked up.

"But...Mr. Stalas, why didn't you tell us?" asked Mother.

"Because it's none of your business," he snapped.

"But for days we've been meeting about Christmas. And you've been so kind to let us use your hut. If you had told us, we could have included a Hanukkah celebration," said Mother.

"Don't assume I haven't celebrated the Maccabees," said the bald man, pointing his finger. "I just don't blather on about it like you fools." The room fell quiet. "I don't wax on about my worship. It's personal. And honestly, poppy seed soup, bah."

People shifted uncomfortably. Jonas started to laugh. He hated poppy seed soup. The bald man joined in. Soon we were all laughing hysterically.

We sat for hours at our meal and makeshift table. We sang songs and carols. After much pressing, Mother persuaded the bald man to recite the Hebrew prayer Ma'oz Tzur. His voice lacked its usual pinched tone. He closed his eyes. The words quivered with emotion.

I stared at our family picture, sitting at the empty seat. We had always spent Christmas at home, with bells tinkling in the streets, and warm smells wafting from the kitchen. I pictured the dining room dark, the chandelier laced in cobwebs, and the table covered in a fine layer of dust. I thought of Papa. What was he doing for Christmas? Did he have a tiny piece of chocolate to melt on his tongue?

The door to the shack blew open. The NKVD pushed inside, pointing guns at us.

"Davai!" yelled a guard, grabbing the man who wound his watch. People began to protest.

"Please, it's Christmas Eve," pleaded Mother. "Don't try to make us sign on Christmas Eve."

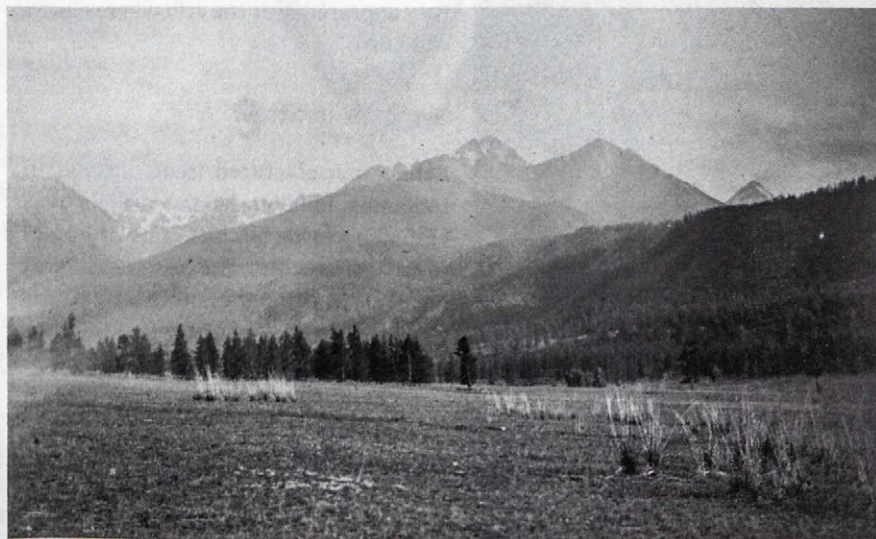
The guards yelled and began pushing people out of the shack. I wasn't leaving without Papa. I scrambled over to the other side of the table. I grabbed our family photo and stuffed it up my dress. I would hide it on the way to the kolkhoz office. Kretzsky didn't notice. He stood motionless, holding his rifle, staring at all the photographs.

Born and raised in Michigan, Ruta Sepetys is the daughter of a Lithuanian refugee. The Baltic nations of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia disappeared from maps in 1941 and did not reappear until 1990. As this is a story seldom told, Ruta wanted to give a voice to the hundreds of thousands of people who lost their lives during Stalin's cleansing of the region.

Ruta lives with her family in Tennessee. *Between Shades of Gray* is her first novel. You can visit Ruta at [rutasepetys.com](http://rutasepetys.com) and [betweenshadesofgray.com](http://betweenshadesofgray.com). Her novel is available in stores and online at Amazon.com, [barnesandnoble.com](http://barnesandnoble.com) and other online booksellers.

~

The family photographs illustrating this story were supplied by Irene Katele. Irene is a first-generation Lithuanian-American. Her parents lived in the Seligenstadt and Schweinfurt Displaced Persons camps after World War II. Irene grew up in suburban Chicago and, like many of her counterparts, she did not speak English until she enrolled in elementary school. She later studied Medieval History and Law. She now lives in Madison, Wisc., with her husband, Ray Bandziulis. Irene teaches in the Legal Studies Program and at the Law School at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In her spare time, Irene writes the blog "Amber Reunion" and knits.

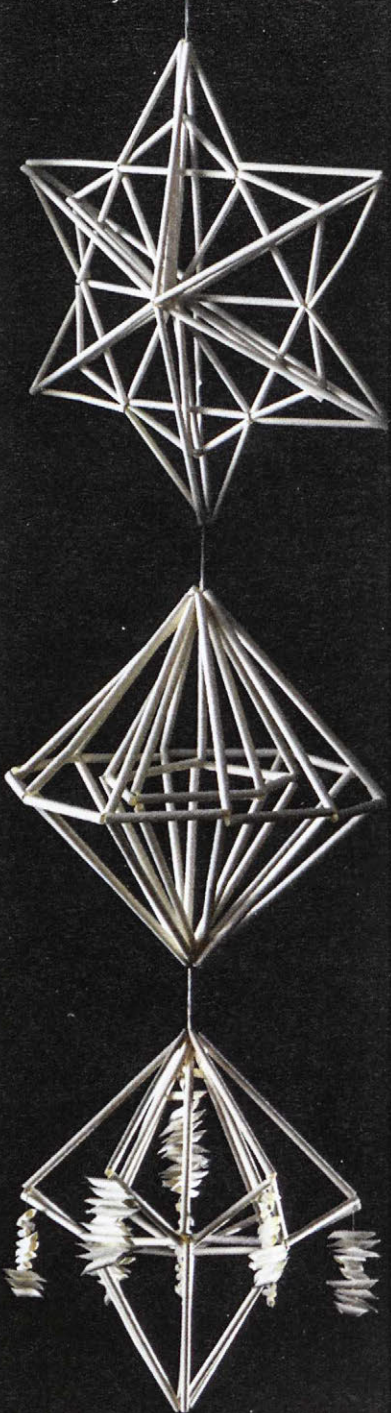


View in the Altai Mountains near Altai Station.



# Šiaudinukai: Traditional Lithuanian Straw Ornaments

By Teresė Vekteris  
Photos by Walter A. Sidas



Traditionally made from natural wheat or rye straw threaded together, Lithuanian Christmas ornaments—šiaudinukai—are delicate and often elaborate pendants. Their geometric designs are often inspired by natural, celestial or religious motifs.

## Tradition Takes Root

The tradition of decorating the branches of an evergreen tree for Christmas, born in Germany in the early 16th century, did not arrive in Lithuania for quite a while. However, when this tradition did take root in the Lithuanian home in the second half of the 19th century, it quickly became popular.

By the first half of the 20th century, Christmas trees appeared frequently in schools and public spaces where people gathered. Today, almost every Lithuanian family decorates their home with a Christmas tree.

Ethnologists speculate that the popularity of the Christmas tree stems from the cult of the tree that has deep roots left over from pagan times. Similarly, the traditional symbols of the holiday—suns, stars, moons and animals—are connected to pre-Christian celebrations of the solstice, when people were anxious about the long nights and wanted to help the sun return. Later, these symbols became associated with the birth of Christ, as they appeared over the crib where Christ was born.

## Symbols in Straw

Before manufactured items arrived in Lithuania, families decorated their trees with chocolates, biscuits, nuts or homemade ornaments. Because straw was plentiful in this agrarian society, it was the first material used for making toys and decorations.

A tree hung with straw ornaments is not only the most traditional, but could also be considered the most beautiful. Symbolically, straw imparts something very special to mankind. Straw is the stalk—the support—of grain. The grain

becomes bread, which supports life. It is something to be treated with respect.

Lithuanians are fond of handicrafts, and handmade ornaments and toys made from natural materials are regaining popularity. Artists create innovative designs based in old traditions, and craft workshops are in demand. Children are taught how to make decorations as part of the school curriculum.

## A Contemporary Twist

While ornaments made of natural wheat or rye straw are part of Lithuanian tradition, adorning homes during weddings or other celebrations, the white paper or plastic straw ornaments that are so typical of Lithuanian Christmas trees today originated fewer than 50 years ago in Chicago.

Josephine Daužvardis, the wife of Petras Daužvardis, Consul General of Lithuania in Chicago from 1961 to 1971, was asked to decorate a Christmas tree with Lithuanian ornaments for an international tree exhibition at the city's Museum of Science and Industry. She wanted to distinguish the Lithuanian tree from all of the others and, with the help of the Sisters of St. Casimir, came up with the idea of creating the ornaments from white paper straws.

The Sisters created a variety of designs based on traditional themes: bell towers, birdcages, stars, snowflakes and other geometric patterns. The Lithuanian tree with the distinctive white decorations was a hit and the drinking straw ornaments became a popular new tradition in Lithuanian-American households.

*Teresė Vekteris is editor of Bridges. Walter A. Sidas is senior corporate photographer for Maplegate Media Group. The šiaudinukai illustrating this article were made last year by members of the New York Chapter of the Lithuanian Folk Art Institute. More examples of their work can be seen on page 21 and on the back cover.*



# How To Make Your Own Šiaudinukai

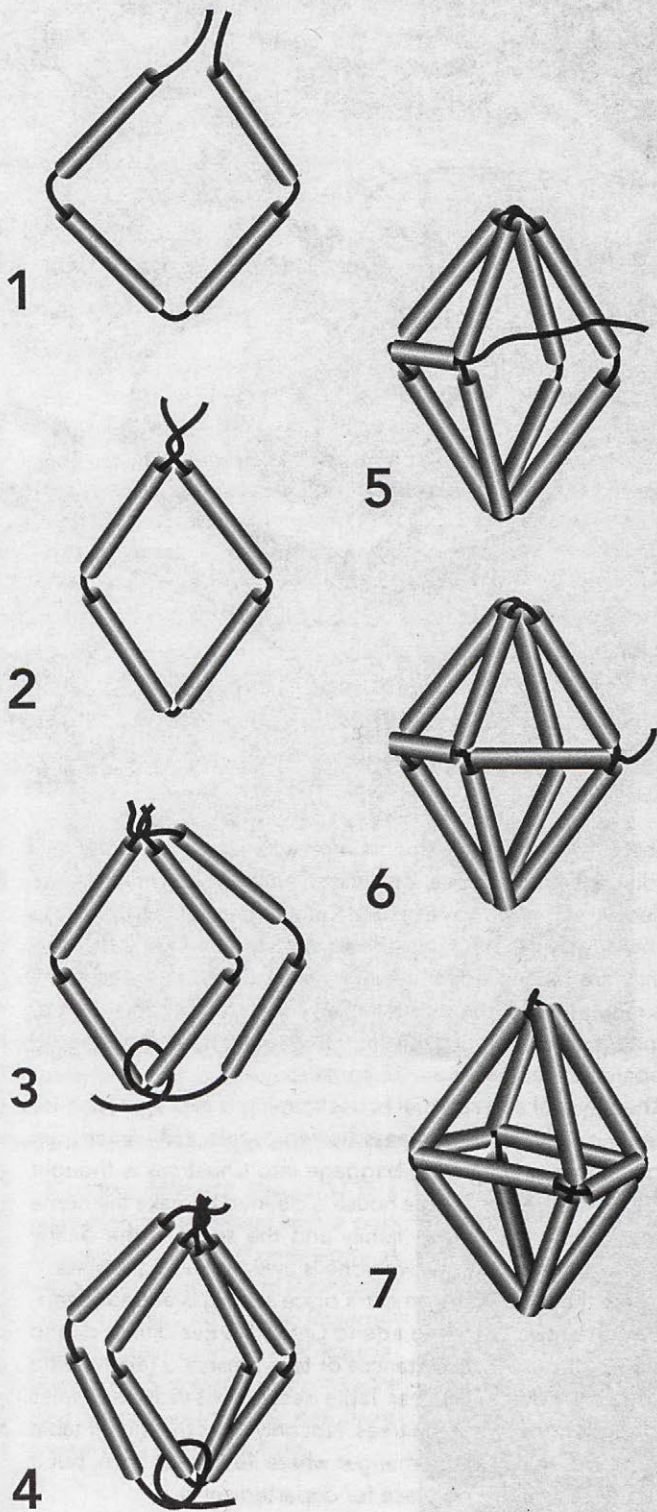
## What you'll need

- Art straws (or paper or plastic drinking straws)
- Ruler
- Sharp scissors or X-Acto knife
- Strong thread, like crochet thread
- A long, blunt needle with an eye big enough to accommodate the thread

## Directions

1. Cut the straws with scissors or an X-Acto knife so that you have 8 pieces of equal length (two or three inches long, depending on how large you want your ornament).
2. Cut a medium to long piece of thread, and thread the needle. Don't knot the thread. If you run short of thread at any point, just tie on another piece as you go and hide the knot inside a piece of straw.
3. Thread the needle lengthwise through four pieces of straw, as if you were stringing beads. (figure 1)
4. Tie the ends of the thread together firmly so that you have a straw "wreath." Do not cut the ends of the thread. (figure 2)
5. Thread two more straws onto the loose end of the string and wrap the thread firmly around the nearest corner string. (figure 3)
6. Add two more straws and again wrap the string firmly around the corner as before. (figure 4)
7. Cut four more pieces or straw of equal lengths. If you want the ornament to be squarish, cut them the same size as the previous pieces. If you want the ornament to be elongated, cut them a half inch to an inch shorter.
8. Thread the needle back through any piece of straw to bring it to the middle.
9. Thread one of the newly cut pieces onto the loose end of the thread, and wrap the string around the next corner. (figure 5)
10. Repeat this step using the remaining three straws so you have one on each side of the ornament. (figure 6)
11. Return the string to the top by threading through any straw. Tie a loop to hang on a tree. (figure 7)

Use your imagination to create more complex ornaments by elaborating on this basic figure. Straw ornaments can also be made from real straw following the steps above. Use rye or wheat straw with a large enough opening through which to pass the needle. To prevent the straw from splitting when it is cut, soak it at least one hour in very hot water and work with it while it is wet. When you cut the pieces, eliminate the bumps or joints in the straw, because the needle won't pass through them.





## a taste of lithuania

### 'Twas the Night Before Kalėdos: The Kūčios Table

By Christiana Noyalas



A table set for Kūčios. Photo: Irene Katele

Christmas celebrations in Lithuania are rich in ceremony and tradition. Christmas Eve, or Kūčios, is the more symbolic and reflective of the two days. In preparing for the holiday, the house is thoroughly cleaned; unresolved conflicts among friends and family are reconciled; ancestors and recently departed souls are remembered; the dinner table is laid with hay and linen to symbolize the birth of Christ in the manger; and 12 dishes are prepared to represent the 12 apostles.

The physical and spiritual housekeeping is in preparation for Jesus's birth and the holiness he represents. Lithuanians are superstitious and carrying baggage into Christmas is thought to be unlucky. Similarly, the house is cleaned to make the home more inviting for visiting family and the souls of the dearly departed who visit while everyone is away at midnight Mass.

When the table is set, an extra place setting is added to represent a relative unable to attend Christmas Eve dinner due to distance or other circumstances or to represent a relative who passed away during the year. Table decorations include candles and sprigs from evergreen trees. Not only does the dinner table hay symbolize hay in the manger where Jesus was born, but it also serves as a resting place for departed souls.

Kūčios dinners are traditionally meatless, eggless, dairy-free and are always prepared with local produce. As Lithuania is usually snow-covered by late December, most produce served is either dried, preserved or stored in a cold cellar. The meal always begins with sharing of the Christmas Eve wafer (known as kalėdaitis, plotkelė or paplotėlis), which is similar to communion wafer. This is followed by 12 dishes, which commonly include beet soup, herring, whiting, potatoes, sauerkraut, mushrooms, Christmas bread, poppy seed milk, oatmeal pudding, cranberry pudding, biscuits, nuts, dried fruit, and apples. No alcoholic beverages are served.

Christmas Day (Kalėdos) dinner, by contrast, is contemporary and without restrictions. Meat appears in many varieties, from roasted turkey, goose and pork to baked ham to an array of smoked and cured sausages. Horseradish, pickles and relishes complement the main courses. Assorted cookies, cakes and sweet pastries are served for dessert. Rules are relaxed today and it is common to see Lithuanian Christmas tables straying from local fare to include imported seafood and produce. Wine, spiced cordials and other alcoholic beverages are served.

Linksmų Kalėdų! (Merry Christmas!)



## A Sample Menu for Kūčios

- Beet Soup - Barščiai
- Herring with Mushrooms – Silkės su Grybais
- Mushroom-filled Crepes – Lietiniai Blynai su Grybais
- Fish in Tomato Sauce – Žuvis su Pomidorais
- Smoked Salmon – Rūkytos Lašišos
- Beet and Bean Salad – Burokelių Mišrainė
- Sauerkraut Salad with Peas – Rauginti Kopūstai su Žirniais
- Potato and Carrot Salad – Bulvių ir Morkų Mišrainė
- Cranberry Pudding – Kisielius
- Christmas Eve Biscuits – Kučiukai
- Poppy Seed Milk – Aguonpienis
- Christmas Compote – Kompotas

## Poppy Seed Milk

(Aguonpienis)

- 1 cup poppy seeds
- 5 to 6 cups water
- 2 tablespoons honey or more, to taste

Place the poppy seeds in a small saucepan and cover them with one to two cups of cold water. Bring the poppy seeds to a boil and then simmer for 15 minutes. Remove from heat and allow the mixture to cool slightly.

Drain the water from the poppy seeds using a fine mesh sieve. Discard the water that drains from the poppy seeds. Place the poppy seed mixture in a small food processor and process until a thick mass forms. This may take some time. After a thick mass forms, transfer the mixture to a glass pitcher.

Pour four cups of cold water over the poppy seeds and stir until well combined. Add honey and stir again. Serve chilled. The poppy seed milk may be sipped by itself or served over Christmas Eve biscuits.



Whether you call them prėskučiai, šližikai or kučiukai, Christmas Eve biscuits are a treat. Photo: Leia

## Cranberry Pudding

(Kisielius)

- |   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| 12 oz bag of fresh cranberries (3 cups) | 2 whole cloves             |
| 3 cups water                            | 1 1/2 cups sugar           |
| 1 cinnamon stick                        | 2 tablespoons potato flour |
|   | 2 teaspoons vanilla        |

Place the cranberries in a saucepan and add enough cold water to cover them (approximately three cups). Add the cinnamon and cloves and bring the mixture to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer until the cranberries are split and their pulp appears. Remove from heat. Remove and discard the cinnamon and cloves.

Force the mixture through a food mill or sieve. Discard the cranberry skins. Reserve one cup of cranberry juice and chill it in the refrigerator. Return the remaining juice and pulp to the saucepan. Add the sugar to the saucepan. Stir the potato flour into the chilled cranberry juice until it is completely dissolved. Add it to the cranberry mixture and bring the pudding to a boil, stirring constantly. When the pudding is translucent, remove it from the heat. Stir in the vanilla. Pour the pudding into individual serving bowls and chill until set.



Cranberries are the basis for the pudding known as kisielius. Photo: CJ Boffoli

*Christiana Noyalas (Naujalis) is a marketing professional with a passion for cooking and genealogy. A resident of southeastern Pennsylvania, Christiana serves on Philadelphia's Lithuanian Music Hall Association board. She test drives cookware and shares recipes on her blog, [www.toolsforkitchens.com](http://www.toolsforkitchens.com).*





## In the Mood for Mugė Philadelphia's Annual Lithuanian Festival a Success

By Gayle Stepnowski

Photos by Kazys Razgaitis

On November 3 and 4, 2012, the Lithuanian Music Hall in Philadelphia held its 35th annual Lithuanian Mugė (festival). More than 600 hundred people turned out for this event, which traditionally takes place over the first weekend in November.

At Mugė, there is always something for everyone, and this year was no exception. Vendors had on display a wide variety of ethnic craftwork, textiles, amber and novelties for sale. Festival-goers were able to partake in some of the most delicious, homemade Lithuanian food and beer around while being entertained by the cheerful music of the "Varpelis" folk band and the fancy footwork of the "Žilvinas" folk dancers. Raffles, door prizes, cooking demonstrations and children's activities added to the appeal of this event.

The Lithuanian Mugė Festival is always a great time to get together, catch up with old friends and celebrate with new. Thanks to everyone who helped to make this year's Mugė a huge success. See you next year!

*South Jersey resident Gayle Stepnowski organized this year's Mugė. She is a member of the board of Philadelphia's Lithuanian Music Hall Association and a member of the Amber Roots Lithuanian Heritage Club. She also dances with Žilvinas.*

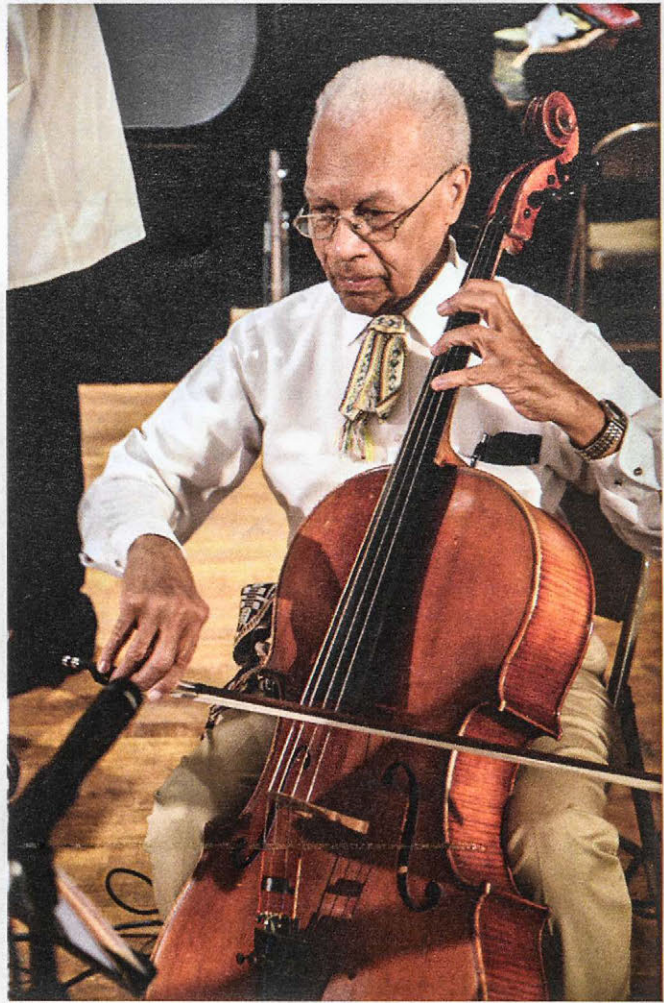
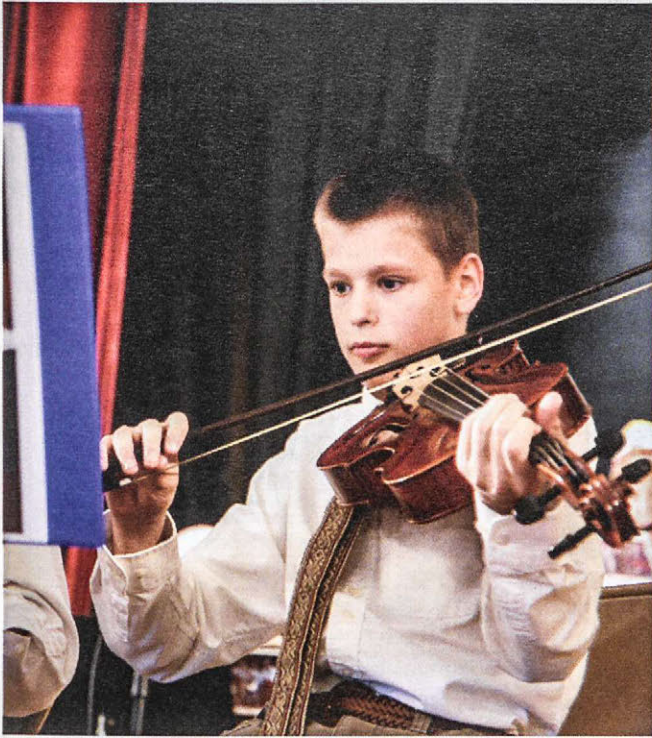


Vendors offered intricately designed amber jewelry along with other wares.



More than 600 people enjoyed varied activities spread over two floors of the hall. Here, some attendees get ready to dance while others eat, socialize and shop.





The folk band "Varpelis" and dance group "Žilvinas" kept the crowd on its feet with lively entertainment.



# genealogy tips & tricks

## Naturalization Papers: The Holy Grail of Information

By Richard Gostautas

In our previous issue, we introduced the use of census records to determine where your family was living during a certain time period and covered all the information a census record can provide. In particular, we looked at information regarding citizenship and naturalization.

Naturalization records are known as "C-Files" (certificate files). For many in genealogical research they are considered to be the "holy grail" of information, particularly after 1906 when the information collected during this process was standardized.

C-Files typically contain three different documents. The first is called the "Declaration of Intention," also known less formally as "first papers." This document was filed at the local county court (or circuit/district court in later years) after a person was in the U.S. for a minimum of two years (the residency requirement). This is step one of the naturalization process.

The second step in naturalization was the filing of the second document of the C-Files, the "Petition for Naturalization." This typically occurred after the immigrant had been in the U.S. for five years, but this time period sometimes varied.

The third document is the "Certificate of Naturalization," issued upon completion of the first two requirements.

In terms of genealogical information, declarations before 1906 contained little information (and varied by court). After 1906, however, information was standardized and often included:

- Name of person filing
- Place of residence (at time of filing)
- Occupation and age (at time of filing)
- Date and place of birth
- Nationality
- Physical description
- Marital status, which often included the name of the spouse, date of marriage, date and place of birth of the spouse, and date and port of entry of the spouse
- Names and dates of birth of any children
- Last place of foreign residence
- Port of embarkation, port of entry to the U.S. and name of the ship
- Name under which the immigrant entered the U.S.
- Photo of the immigrant (not always)

After 1906, a "Certificate of Arrival" was required as part of the naturalization process and may be included in the C-Files. No immigrant could be naturalized without the government verifying the name, date and ship on which the immigrant arrived.

There were some exceptions to the naturalization process. One major exception was "derivative" citizenship granted to spouses and children—they often would automatically

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

**DECLARATION OF INTENTION**  
(Invalid for all purposes seven years after the date hereof)

OF PENNSYLVANIA In the U.S. DISTRICT Court  
DISTRICT of PHILADELPHIA.

**JONAS MARKUNAS**

JOSEPH **Ward** Justice of the Peace  
has tendered to me, aged **52** years, do declare on oath that my personal description is:  
color **white**, complexion **dark**, height **5** feet **10** inches; weight **180** pounds; visible distinctive marks  
**white spot on the left hand**

**Lithuania**, nationality  
**Birzais Lithuania**, on **Apr. 30th 1883**

married. The name of my wife or husband is \_\_\_\_\_

entered on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_, she or he was  
entered the United States \_\_\_\_\_ for permanent residence therein, and now  
I have \_\_\_\_\_ children, and the name, date and place of birth,  
and residence of each of said children are as follows:

Therefore made a declaration of Intention: Number **80079**, on **Jul. 18, 1924**  
U.S. District at **Phila. Pa.**

Place of residence was **Kurklau's Lithuania**

last in the United States of America from **Hamburg Germany**

Place of permanent residence in the United States was at **Phila. Pa.**

Date of arrival in the United States **Jul. 4th 1913**

Name of ship **S.S. Frinz Oskar**

I, before being admitted to citizenship, renounce forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, by name, to the prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty of which I may be at the time of my becoming a citizen or subject; I am not an anarchist; I am not a polygamist nor a believer in the practice of polygamy; and I believe in good faith to become a citizen of the United States of America and to reside permanently therein; and I have the photograph affixed to the duplicate and triplicate hereof is a likeness of me; So HELP ME GOD.

*Jonas Markunas*

Subscribed and sworn to before me in the office of the Clerk of said Court, at **Phila. Pa.** this **8th** day of **December** anno Domini **1924** Certification No. **3-182996** from the Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization showing the lawful entry of the declarant for permanent residence on the date stated above, has been received by me. The photograph affixed to the duplicate and triplicate hereof is a likeness of the declarant.

**GEORGE BRODECK.**

Clerk of U.S. DISTRICT Court.  
By *Harry B. ...* Deputy Clerk.

Form 2202-1-A  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE

The Declaration of Intention, or "first papers," reveals a wealth of information, including date and place of birth, last place of foreign residence ports or embarkation and arrival, and sometimes even a photo.

become citizens when the husband/father was naturalized prior to 1906. A great article by Marian L. Smith on this topic can be found here: <http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1998/summer/women-and-naturalization-1.html>.

One thing to keep in mind is that naturalization has always been a voluntary process and is not a requirement. Statistics provided by the National Archives (<http://www.archives.gov/research/naturalization>) shows that for foreign-born persons listed in the census years from 1890-1930, around 25 percent had not become naturalized or filed their "first papers." As an example, my great-grandfather, Florijonas Stanislovas Gostautas, came to the U.S. in 1909 but it was not until 1942 (33 years later) that he filed his "first papers." He did so only after losing his job of 18 years with Phelps Dodge Copper Products in Elizabeth, N.J., because he did not have his citizenship. Finally, in 1946, he received his Certificate of Naturalization, was rehired and worked another 15 years before retiring in 1962.



# genealogy tips & tricks

The question now is—where does one find naturalization records? If the year of naturalization was prior to 1906, the process would most likely have occurred in a state or local court. In most cases, and as a general rule, you will need to contact the prothonotary (or principal clerk of the court) for the county court representing the town in which the person was living at the time of filing. For instance, if the person was living in Wilkes-Barre, Pa., which is in Luzerne County, then you would need to contact the Luzerne County Court.

The location of records will vary state by state, and some have been transferred to the state archive systems. However, if you start with the local/county courts first, they should be able to tell you where naturalization records are located. These records will normally require a small fee for copying the records.

After 1906, most naturalizations occurred in federal courts (circuit or district) and the courts would then forward copies of the records to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). As a general rule, these records are now held at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) regional facility in which the court resided. To find the location of a regional facility, you can visit <http://www.archives.gov/locations/>. This website will also provide contact information so you can send a research request to them directly for a nominal fee.

An alternate source for these records is from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS, previously INS). Recently USCIS began offering an online fee-for-service program for requesting these types of records (including alien registration files, or AR-Files, and visa files). The two services available include an Index Search for \$20 and then, based on the results from that search, a Record Copy Request for \$20 or \$35 depending on what type of record it is. More information on this program can be found by visiting <http://www.uscis.gov/genealogy>. On the right-hand side of the webpage will be an option to "Order Online Now." This will allow you to make your research request online and pay for it ahead of time, which significantly cuts down the response time over the traditional mail-in request (which is also available).

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR		3 132998	
IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE		No. ....	
<b>CERTIFICATE OF ARRIVAL</b>			
the immigration records show that the alien named below arrived at the port, as shown, and was lawfully admitted to the United States of America for permanent residence.			
JONS MARKUNAS		Verified for Reentry	
Phila., Pa.		Permit	
July 4, 1913		Feb. 22, 1932	
S/S Prinz Oskar			
this certificate of arrival is issued under authority of, and in conformity with, the Act of June 29, 1906, as amended, solely for the use of the alien herein named and only for the purpose of reentry.			

A certificate of arrival shows not only the original date of entry, but also subsequent dates of re-entry, letting you know if your relative traveled back to Lithuania at any time. It also shows the name under which the immigrant entered the country—often the spelling the ship's clerk thought he heard. This may help you located the ships' manifest for this person more easily.

A Certificate of Naturalization was issued after completion of the first two requirements. This document will sometimes indicate a name change requested by the new citizen (in this case, from Uršulė to Julia).

I have requested records using both avenues, contacting the local county court/state archive directly and through the online USCIS program. There were several things I noticed: 1) the copies of the records from the local courts were not always the best and were difficult to read; 2) the records from the local courts did not often contain the actual Certificate of Naturalization but did include the Certificate of Arrival; 3) Copies requested through the USCIS program were significantly better and included the Certificate of Naturalization but not the Certificate of Arrival. Additionally, due to privacy rules, information such as birthdates or addresses of witnesses is often redacted. However, if the person for which the information is redacted is known to be deceased, and this can be proved (e.g., with a photo of headstone, death certificate, etc.) then there is an appeal process for getting another copy without redaction.

As you can see, there are many routes to obtaining naturalization information, all of which have advantages and disadvantages. While I recommend the pursuit of ALL avenues to get a complete set of naturalization records, be warned that it can get pricey if you are researching many family members and following the route of "leaving no stone unturned."

I wish you luck and good fortune in your search. Don't forget, if you have a genealogical question, please let us know (email [bridges.terese@gmail.com](mailto:bridges.terese@gmail.com)) so we can cover it in a future issue!

Richard Gostautas currently oversees the Lithuanian Global Genealogy Society (LGGS) at [www.lithuaniangenealogy.org](http://www.lithuaniangenealogy.org). LGGS is the sponsor of the LithuanianGenealogy group on Yahoo! that has 2,000+ members assisting one another in their research. Richard has been performing genealogy research for 15+ years and is one of many volunteers assisting in those researching their Lithuanian roots.



## current events

### Lithuanian Population Falls Below 3 Million

Lithuania's population has shrunk to its lowest level in decades. Continued migration to richer west European nations is blamed for the fall.

Figures from Statistics Lithuania showed that 3.04 million people lived in Lithuania when authorities conducted a national census in March 2011. By September this year, the number had dropped to 2.98 million. At the time of the previous census, in 2001, Lithuania had a population of 3.48 million.

Of those who left Lithuania in 2011, half went to Britain, which was the only member of the EU to open its labor market immediately to citizens of new member states in 2004.

Analysts warn that the exodus will have long-term negative consequences for Lithuania's economy as more young people leave.

### New Lithuanian Government Partially in Place

After two rounds of October elections and a six-week delay over disagreements on the composition of the government, Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė approved an incomplete parliament (Seimas) in November.

Grybauskaitė nominated Algirdas Butkevičius, whose Social Democratic party won 38 seats, for the position of prime minister. His party was able to form a majority coalition with the Labor Party, the Order & Justice party and the Lithuanian Polish Election Action.

Seimas confirmed Butkevičius' appointment, but Grybauskaitė approved only 12 of his 14 nominees for cabinet positions. The two disagree on including candidates from the Labor party. Butkevičius believes they should be represented because they won 29 seats; Grybauskaitė opposes their participation because they are suspected of accounting and tax fraud as well as voting violations.

The 141-seat Seimas currently only has 139 members, as ballots in two districts were declared invalid. Those districts will vote again in March.

At the body's inaugural meeting, Seimas members elected Vydas Gedvilas of the Labor Party as speaker. Grybauskaitė did not attend, the first time since independence that the first session of Seimas was not attended by the president of the county. She sent a congratulatory message instead.

Butkevičius says the new government will focus less on fiscal discipline and more on economic stimulus. This position contrasts starkly with that of outgoing prime minister Andrius Kubilius, who imposed unpopular austerity measures such as public spending cuts, pension reductions and higher taxes. His Homeland Union-Christian Democrat party won only 33 seats in this year's election.

### Business

...Akropolis Group companies Ozo Turtas and Taikos Turtas have signed a contract with Hennes & Mauritz (H&M) to open clothing stores in Vilnius' and Klaipėda's Akropolis shopping and entertainment centers. The first H&M stores will open in the fall of 2013.

...The European Commission is considering changes to EU Energy Policy by reducing the requirement on the use of crop-based bio-fuels from 10% to 5%. Decreased demand could push biofuel factories into bankruptcy and a 20-30 percent drop in the market price of rapeseed could cost Lithuanian farmers up to 1 billion litas.

... A "Baltic Innovation Fund" was established to attract investment to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. The European Investment Fund and the countries are investing a combined 100 million euros, hoping to double, through private finance, capital available to Baltic small- and medium-sized enterprises with high growth potential.

...Swedish financial services group SEB relocated its information technology support call center for bank employees to Vilnius in November, creating 35 jobs. SEB employees calling the IT support department will be served in English, Swedish and German.

...The North Atlantic Council in October approved Lithuania's Energy Security Center becoming a NATO-accredited center of excellence.

...International real estate company Sotheby's Realty Baltic opened a representative office in Vilnius as part of the company's strategic plan for development in the Baltic countries. They opened offices in Riga and Jurmala in 2010 and in Tallinn in 2011.

...Chevron Global Energy has bought a 50 percent stake in Lithuania-registered oil company LL Investicijos, which holds a license to prospect for oil and shale gas at the 2,400-square-kilometer Rietašas field. The purchase could have a positive effect on gas prices, challenging the monopoly held by the Russian gas group Gazprom.

...Polish oil company LOTOS Group and American CalEnergy Resources Ltd may establish a joint company for shale gas extraction in Lithuania. Lotos will hold the larger stake in the venture, while the Americans will finance the preparatory work. The companies plan to make the decision about the partnership in 2014.

### International

...Prince Albert II of Monaco made his first official visit to the country in October, accompanied by his wife, Princess Charlene. Monaco and Lithuania established diplomatic relations in 2011. The prince and President Dalia Grybauskaitė discussed environmental protection, renewable energy sources and nuclear safety. They also discussed the protection of the marine environment of the Baltic Sea, which the prince supports through his charitable foundation.

...Vilnius hosted the 31st Session of the Baltic Assembly (BA), which discussed mechanisms for regulation and supervision of the finance market, as well as development of investment and healthcare projects. The annual BA 5,000-euro award in science was given to



Professor Algis Petras-Piskarskas for his research in to progressive laser physics and non-linear optics.

...Swedish experts presented a report on "The Security and Defensibility of the Baltic States" in October, citing the main security threats as energy and cyber. They also said the Baltic states would not be able to fight any potential military threat from the East and would need to assure that their NATO partners are capable of reacting to a crisis. They also said Lithuania should be concerned about the Kaliningrad oblast's political, economic, ecologic and social stability.

...Finnish state railway company VR Group is interested in building a "Rail Baltica" railway line connecting Finland to Central Europe. The rail line would travel through Lithuania on its way to Germany.

...Lithuanian archeologists have completed a fourth trip to Ghor province in Afghanistan to transfer knowledge and materials from former expeditions to local cultural heritage protection officers. The Lithuanians were the first to investigate the province, discovering 20 archaeological monuments and creating Afghanistan's first archaeological monument register.

...Lithuania and France signed an agreement under which the International Organization of la Francophonie will allocate 80,000 euros to teach French to Lithuanian diplomats and civil servants to help prepare Lithuania for presidency of the EU Council. French is the EU's second most important working language after English.

...The Lithuanian Embassy in Belarus was attacked on November 6, when two Molotov cocktails were thrown over the embassy's fence when the Lithuanian Ambassador in Minsk, Linas Linkevičius, was inside. The resulting fire was put out by embassy police. There were no warnings before the attack, which is still under investigation.

...The Lithuanian government approved a plan to encourage greater cooperation with Latvia by encouraging citizens to learn the Latvian language, supporting Latvian educational institutions, providing funds for Latvian students studying in Lithuania and putting bilingual signs on the Vilnius-Riga road among other initiatives.

...Norwegian electronics manufacturer Kitron will expand its facility in Kaunas with a 6 million euro investment, increasing production capacity and creating 60 new jobs. The Lithuanian site was chosen over facilities in the U.S., Norway and China.

...The first-ever estimate of the economic burden of cancer in Europe shows that it exceeds 124 billion euros every year. Data from the World Health Organization and other sources revealed that Germany incurs the highest per-capita costs for its patients while Lithuania spends the least.

## Nation

...The Lithuanian Post has acquired 214 retail financial services locations from bankrupt Snoras Bank. The first new "mini-banks" will open this year, offering all financial services currently available in Post banking sites. The mini-banks will employ 100 new staff.

...A new law in Lithuania attempts to increase transparency by obligating more officials to declare their property assets. Included in the legislation are state or municipal agencies, their deputies and their families; deputy heads of major companies and their families; many international officials and their families; judicial bodies; and candidates for office and their family members.

...Patrons of Vilnius' Tamsta Club followed U.S. election returns with prizes, contests, political analysis, U.S. history lessons, musical and dancing. A mock election among club-goers predicted Barack Obama's victory with 70% of the vote over Mitt Romney's 26%.

...The Ministry of Economy has taken over the Visaginas Nuclear Power Plant enterprise following a directive from the European Parliament. The Ministry of Economy is now responsible for business and commercial aspects of the electrical industry while the Ministry of Energy handles the implementation of strategic decisions.

...In preparation for the trial against Vladimir Antonov, former shareholder of the bankrupt and liquidated Snoras Bank, the Ministry of Finance plans to spend about 10 million litas on law firms representing Lithuania. Antonov and a co-defendant are charged with misappropriating 1.7 billion litas. Antonov filed a claim against Lithuania for inappropriate protection of his investments.

...Lithuania's health ministry has developed qualitative and quantitative performance indicators for inpatient health care providers. Hospitals will need to monitor and report measures such as patient satisfaction, average duration of treatment and infection rates in 2013. Rankings data will be available to the public in 2014.

...In a September poll measuring perception of politicians, only three politicians were ranked positively by more than half the adult population of Lithuania. President Dalia Grybauskaitė received favorable ratings from 77 percent of those surveyed; ex-president Valdas Adamkus, 59%; and Seimas member Social Democrat Algirdas Butkevičius, 56%.

...The Lithuanian General Prosecutor's Office is investigating allegations that money stolen from the Russian budget was laundered through Ūkio Bank in 2008.

...Even though the price of natural gas in Lithuania went down by 2.84% in September, the upcoming heating season is expected to be the most expensive in its history.



## current events

continued from previous page

...A pre-trial investigation is under way involving Vilniaus Energija, the country's main biofuels supplier Bionovus and five other companies over suspicions that Vilniaus Energija raised heating prices and hurt customers while yielding large profits for the company and giving its executives dividends.

...Lithuania's Supreme Court exonerated two former executives at the Baltic nation's oil refinery of criminal negligence charges stemming from a fire that damaged the plant in 2006.

...The cocktail bar "Moscow" in Vilnius will be fined between 500 and 1,000 litas for "Soviet Halloween" party ads on Facebook that used Soviet symbols and portraits of Stalin and Lenin, which are prohibited in Lithuania.

...Lithuania experienced its first snowfall of the season on October 27. Snow fell in the southern and eastern parts of the country, covering roads with up to 10 cm of snow in places.

...Lithuanian parents are protesting the publication of children's books that tell stories of a girl who woke up one day as a boy and a boy who woke up as a girl. Educators say the books teach gender equality while opponents claim they promote homosexuality.

### People

...Mountain climber Edita Nichols set foot atop 8,156-meter Manaslu mountain in the Himalayas on October 1, spreading the Lithuanian tricolor at the summit. The expedition is part of her preparations to climb Mt. Everest. She was the first Lithuanian woman to climb the sixth highest peak in the world, Cho Oyu (8,201 meters) in the Himalayas.

...Michigan psychologist Romualdas Kriaučiūnas received a 13,000-litas award from Lithuania's Ministry of Education and Science for life-long achievements in promoting science. Kriaučiūnas, 76, was born in Lithuania but fled to Germany before coming to the U.S.

...Actress Eugenija Pleškytė, 74, died November 8. Her remains were escorted by some of Lithuania's legendary actors to Antakalnis Cemetery in Vilnius, and buried at the Hill of Artists. Pleškytė received Lithuania's "Golden Crane" in 2009 for her achievements.

...In November rankings of the world's best tennis players, 22-year-old Lithuanian Richard Berankis ranked in 96th place, allowing him to finish the year in the top 100. Also ranked were Grigelis Laurynas, 400th; Gvidas Sabeckis, 1449th; and Dovydas Šakinis, 1561st.

...Lithuania's anti-corruption agency charged Vilnius Deputy Mayor Romas Adomavičius with taking a personal bribe of 40,000 litas for ensuring a company would win an 8 million litas contract. Adomavičius, 59, denied the charge after money was seized from his office during a raid by the Special Investigation Service in September.

### Arts and Leisure

...The number of free TV channels in Lithuania is shrinking as networks seek to void cable-cast licenses that obligate them to provide free programming. Only 10 Lithuanian and two foreign channels are currently free to watch.

...Lithuania selected Audrius Stonys' documentary "Ramin" as its entry for best foreign-language Oscar. The film follows a 75-year-old Georgian wrestler on a journey to a remote village to seek out the girl he loved, and lost, 50 years ago.

# bridges

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Dec2012



Please verify all events, as places and times are subject to change.

## DECEMBER 2012

December 30, 3 p.m.  
**The Sunflower Project Concert**  
 The German Society of Philadelphia, 611 Spring Garden St.  
 Works by Jewish, Lithuanian and American composers.  
 Tickets: \$20, \$100 for patron level  
 Info: jewishlithuanianhp@gmail.com, 240-463-6884, facebook.com/pages/The-Jewish-Lithuanian-Heritage-Project

## JANUARY 2013

January 10, 5-7 p.m.  
**Commemorating Lithuania's Fight for Freedom**  
 The German Marshall Fund of the United States, 1744 R Street, NW, Washington, D.C.  
 Program, exhibit, refreshments  
 Info: fpintern@gmfus.org

January 13  
**Lithuanian Freedom Defenders Day**

January 18-21  
**Winter Šventė/Celebration**  
 Camp Neringa, Vermont  
 Stay the weekend or come for a day. Skiing, cheesemaking, crafts, talent show, winter activities.  
 Info, rates and reservations: regina@neringa.org, 978-582-5592, www.neringa.org

January 27, 2:30 p.m.  
**North Chicago Lithuanians Ski Trip at Wilmot Mountain**  
 11931 Fox River Road, Twin Lakes, Wisc.  
 Info: 847-362-8675

## FEBRUARY 2013

February 2  
**Gen. T. Daukanto Marine Rifle Company Get-together**  
 Lithuanian World Center, 4911 127th St., Lemont, Ill  
 Info: Severinas Dubininkas, 708-691-6565

February 3, 12:30 p.m.  
**"Child's Gate to Learning" annual performance report**  
 Lithuanian World Center, 4911 127th St., Lemont, Ill  
 Info: www.childgate.org, vvm@childgate.org

February 9, 7 p.m.  
**Lithuanian World Center 25th Anniversary Gala**  
 Lithuanian World Center, 4911 127th Street, Lemont, Ill.

February 16  
**Celebration of Lithuania's First Independence**

February 16, 11:30 a.m.  
**Independence Day Celebration**  
 Waukegan, Lake County District  
 Info: 847-855-5294

## MARCH 2013

March 9  
**Lithuanian consulate opens**  
 Aspen, Colo.

March 11  
**Lithuanian Independence Day (1991)**

March 16, 9:30 a.m.  
**Waukegan Lake County Chapter Annual Meeting**  
 10 S. Lake St., Mundelein, Ill.  
 Info: 847-855-5294

March 16, 1-3 p.m.  
**Amber Roots Philadelphia Lithuanian Heritage Club**  
 Lithuanian Music Hall, 2715 E. Allegheny Ave., Philadelphia  
 English-speaking. Open to all. Bring a dish to share.  
 Info: milliemarks@aol.com, 484-231-8532

## APRIL 2013

April 6, 4 p.m.  
**Ateitininkai Relief Fund Annual Congress**  
 Ateitininkai Home, Lemont, Ill

April 20  
**Lithuanian Montessori school "Žiburėlis" 30th anniversary celebration**  
 Lithuanian World Center, 4911 127th St., Lemont, Ill

April 20, 1-3 p.m.  
**Amber Roots Philadelphia Lithuanian Heritage Club**  
 Lithuanian Music Hall, 2715 E. Allegheny Ave., Philadelphia  
 Info: milliemarks@aol.com

## MAY 2013

May 18, 1-3 p.m.  
**Amber Roots Philadelphia Lithuanian Heritage Club**  
 Lithuanian Music Hall, 2715 E. Allegheny Ave., Philadelphia  
 Info: milliemarks@aol.com,

## JUNE 2013

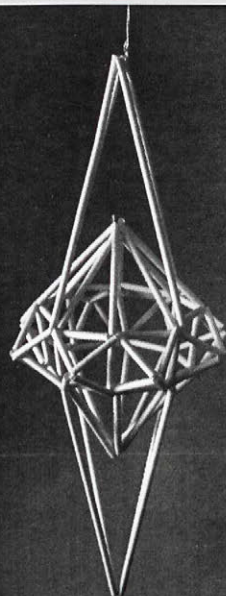
June 15, 1-3 p.m.  
**Amber Roots Philadelphia Lithuanian Heritage Club**  
 Lithuanian Music Hall, 2715 E. Allegheny Ave., Philadelphia

## JULY 2013

July 25-28  
**Knights of Lithuania 100th Anniversary Convention**  
 Boston Marriott Quincy Hotel, Quincy, Mass.  
 Info: knightsloflithuania100thanniversary.org

## 2014

July 2-4, 2014  
**IX Dainu Šventė (9th Lithuanian Song Festival)**

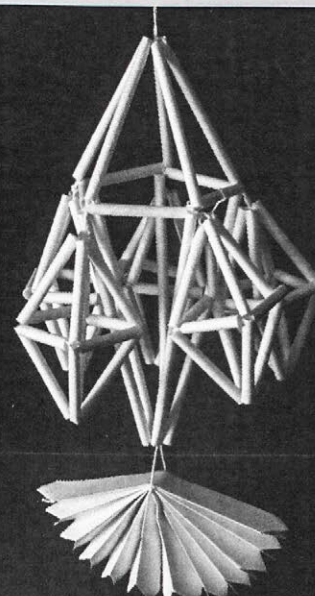


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