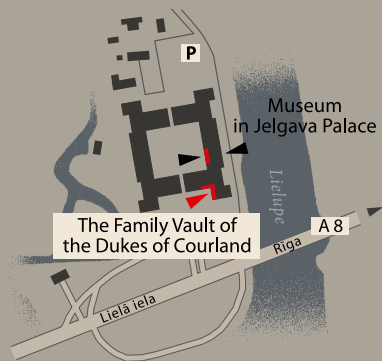




The Vault of the Dukes of Courland. Photo 2010



The Vault of the Dukes of Courland is open
from 1 May through to 31 October 9.00–17.00

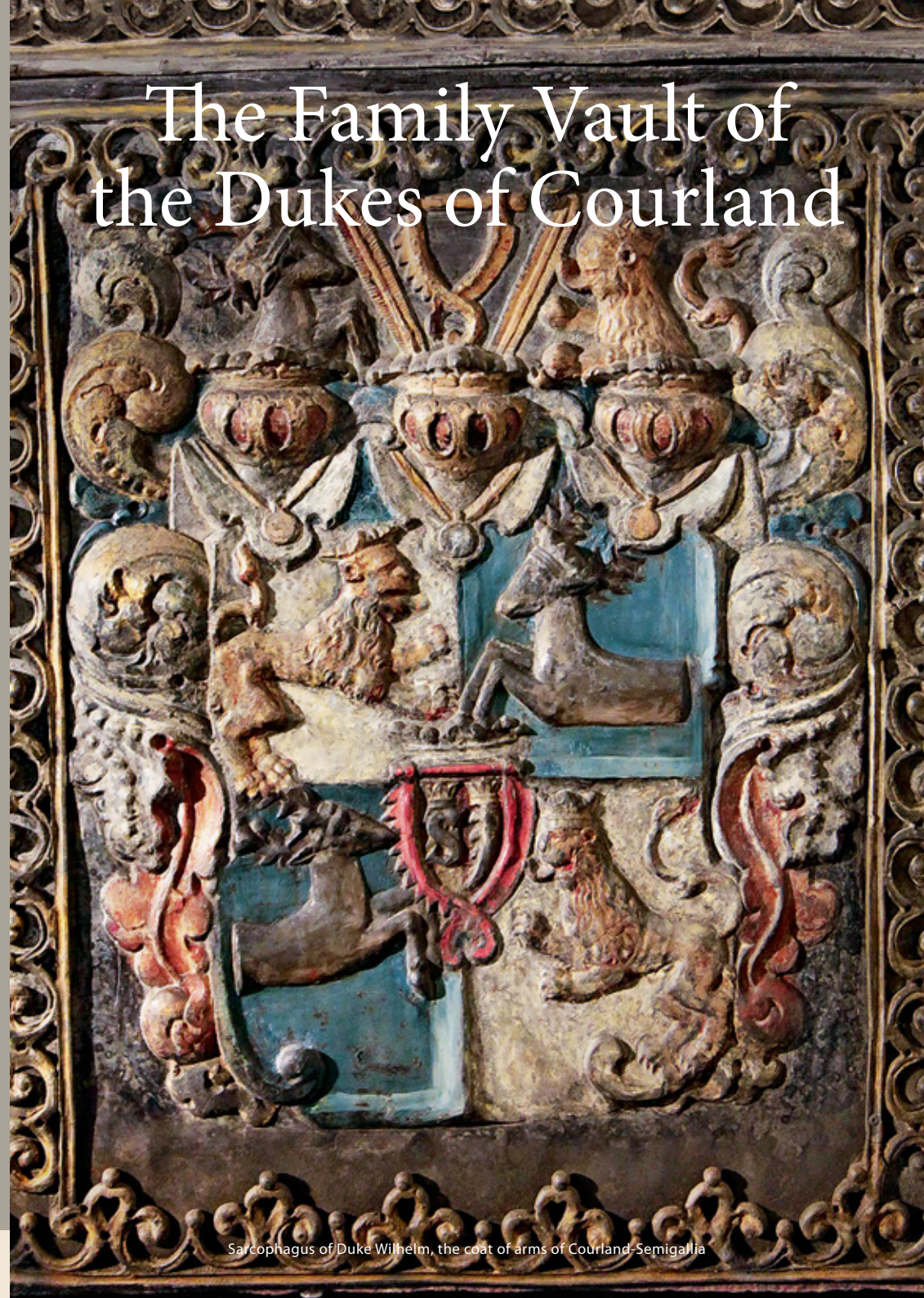
Bookings by phone +371 63962197, +371 26499151
or email: booking@rundale.net

The Museum of the Latvian University of Agriculture in Jelgava Palace provides information about the history of Jelgava Palace, its architecture, construction history and interiors.
Contact information: muzejs@llu.lv or phone +371 63005617

GPS 56.655186, 23.733936

Additional tourist information can be obtained at the **Regional Tourist Information Centre in Jelgava**
Akadēmijas iela 1, Jelgava, LV-3001, Latvija
Phone: +371 63005445, email: tic@tornis.jelgava.lv

The Family Vault of the Dukes of Courland



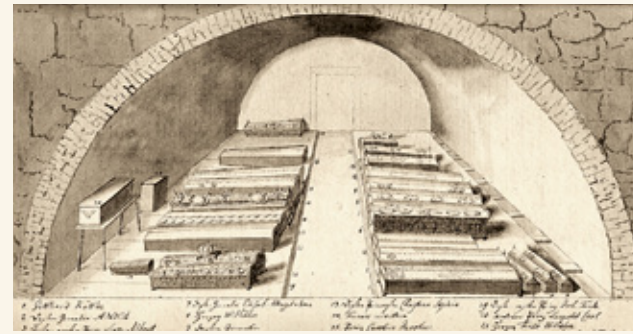
Sarcophagus of Duke Wilhelm, the coat of arms of Courland-Semigallia



Jelgava Palace, viewed from the bridge



Funeral cortege of Duchess Louise Charlotte



Tombs of the Dukes of Courland in the old Jelgava Castle. The 1730s



Sarcophagus of Sophie Amelie

Twenty-four members of the House of Kettler and six members of the Biron family are entombed in the Vault of the Dukes of Courland. The first deceased sons of Duke Gotthard – Sigismund Albert, George and Gotthard – were initially buried in the vault of Kuldīga Castle and later were moved to the Vault of the Dukes of Courland situated under the chapel (consecrated in 1582) of Jelgava Castle. Duke Gotthard was the first to be buried there in 1587.

In 1737 the old chapel was torn down along with the Dukes' residence in order to create space for the new palace designed by Francesco Bartolomeo Rastrelli, and the sarcophagi were temporarily moved to a storage room. In 1740 they were placed in two semi-basement rooms of the newly built palace. In 1820 a more spacious vault was built in the south-east corner of the palace where it remains until this day. Wrought iron lattices bearing the initials of Duke Ernst Johann decorate the windows of the Vault.



Sarcophagus of Duke Wilhelm



Sarcophagus of Duke Jacob

Magdalene, her husband Duke Friedrich († 1642) and Duke Wilhelm († 1640). Another group of stylistically similar sarcophagi consists of the Baroque sarcophagus of Duke Jacob, his wife Louise Charlotte, and their son Karl Jacob. They are richly adorned with acanthus leaf motifs in relief as well as the coats of arms of Courland-Semigallia, and presumably were made at the same time between 1676 and 1677. The sarcophagus of Duchess Sophie Amelie († 1688) demonstrates the Baroque tendency for splendour and over-exuberance of decoration. The sarcophagus of her husband, Duke Friedrich Kasimir, perished in 1705. The large pewter sarcophagus of Ferdinand († 1737), the last sovereign of the Kettler family, was made in Danzig. The wrought pewter sarcophagi of Duke Ernst Johann, his wife Benigna Gottlieb and their grandson Peter were also made in the same workshop in 1784.

The latest interment in the Vault is that of Charlotte Friederica († 1791), the daughter of Duke Peter and Duchess Dorothea. Duke Peter of Courland and his wife Dorothea are buried in Sagan, Poland.

There are also clothes and examples of textiles on display from burials of the Dukes and their family members.



Sarcophagi of Duke Ernst Johann and Duchess Benigna Gottlieb

and opened to the public. However, after World War II the Vault of the Dukes of Courland was continuously being ransacked. Since 1990 it has been open to visitors as part of the permanent exhibition of the Rundāle Palace Museum. The conservation work of textiles, sarcophagi and wooden coffins is ongoing.

The Vault of the Dukes of Courland contains twenty-one metal sarcophagi and nine wooden

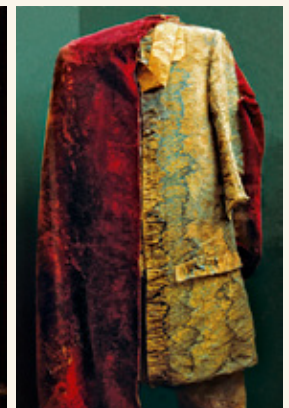


Lattices of the Vault's window with the monogram of Duke Ernst Johann

coffins. The oldest pewter sarcophagus belongs to Sigismund Albert († 1569), the son of Duke Gotthard. The sarcophagi of Gotthard, his wife Anna († 1602) and the wife of Duke Wilhelm, Sophie († 1610), are rather simple, yet they bear fine engravings and coats of arms. The most sumptuous pewter sarcophagi, adorned with ornamental reliefs in the style of Mannerism, are those made in 1645 by the master Franz Warnrath from Jelgava for Duchess Elisabeth

Display cases of children's clothes in the history section

Duke Friedrich Kasimir's waist-coat and a detail of his cloak



The Vault sustained severe damage in September 1705 when Swedish soldiers looted it and also in 1919 when it was vandalized by the Bolshevik soldiers and Bermond-Avalov's army. From 1934 to 1935 the sarcophagi were restored and the Vault was extended