

# VALMIERA

## HANSEATIC TOWN



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**VALMIERA**



**Publisher:** Valmiera City council, 2020

**Photo:** Valmiera City photo archive, Gustavs Maziņš, restaurant "Rātes vārti"

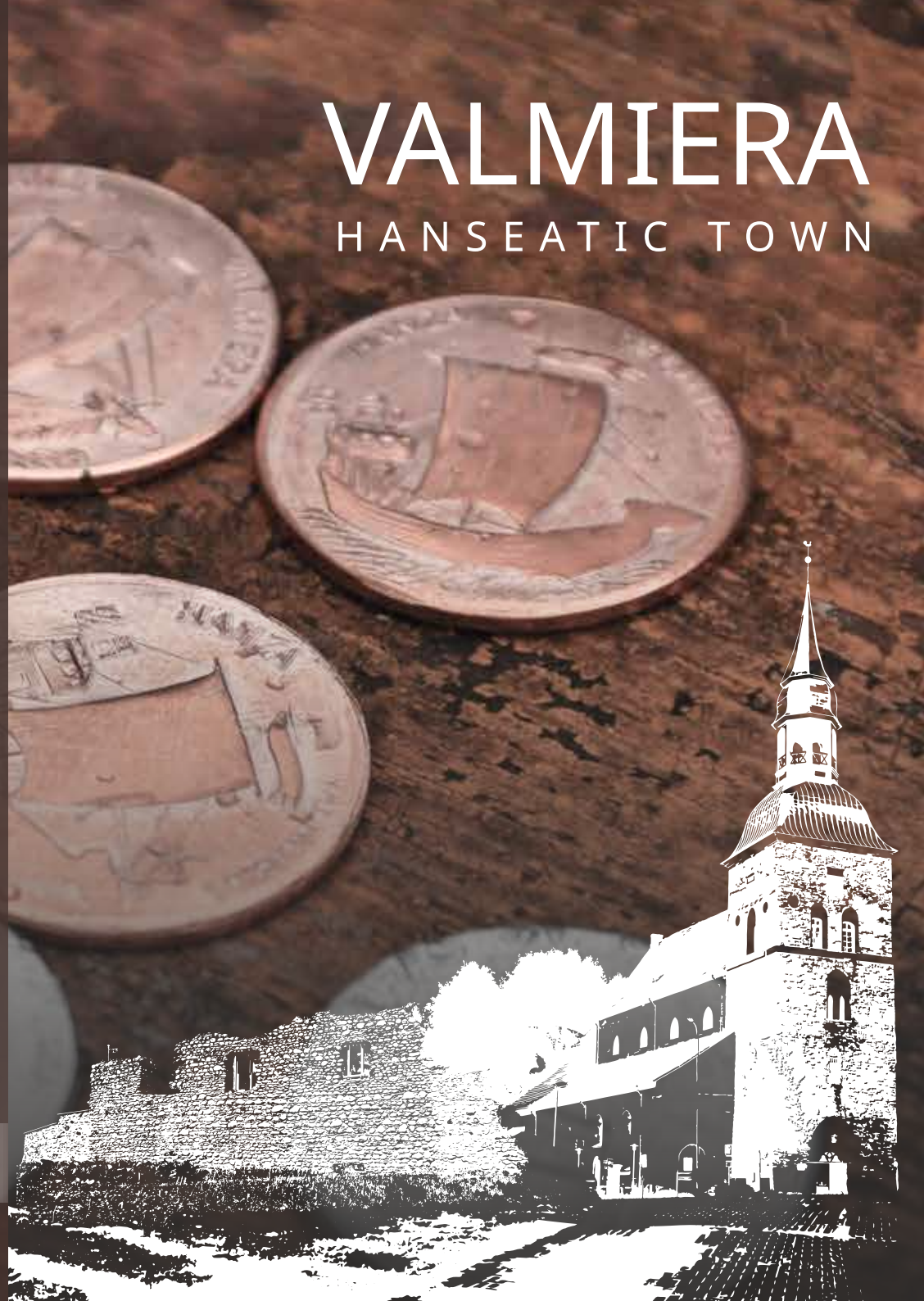
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# VALMIERA (WOLMAR)

Noteworthy cultural-historical heritage and the preserved nature has always made Valmiera an attractive destination at the shores of the Gauja river. Valmiera as a town is first mentioned in writings in 1283. It was famous for its wax, which was the best in the northern lands, fresh honey, great fur masters, hemp rope weavers and hardworking grain thrashers. Hence the reason why Valmiera was included in the Hanseatic League, becoming one of Livonia's most important political and economical centres.

Nowadays there's annual fairs every October, gathering hundreds of craftsmen. Guests of the town as well as locals can have a go at craftsmanship. Everyone has the chance to learn about the steps of how to create a wooden barrel or how the tasty "Valmiermuižas alus" is being brewed. Meanwhile in the Museum of Valmiera guests can see ancient blacksmith work tools and a Hanseatic League merchant boat, and also find out more about the life of knights and the town.

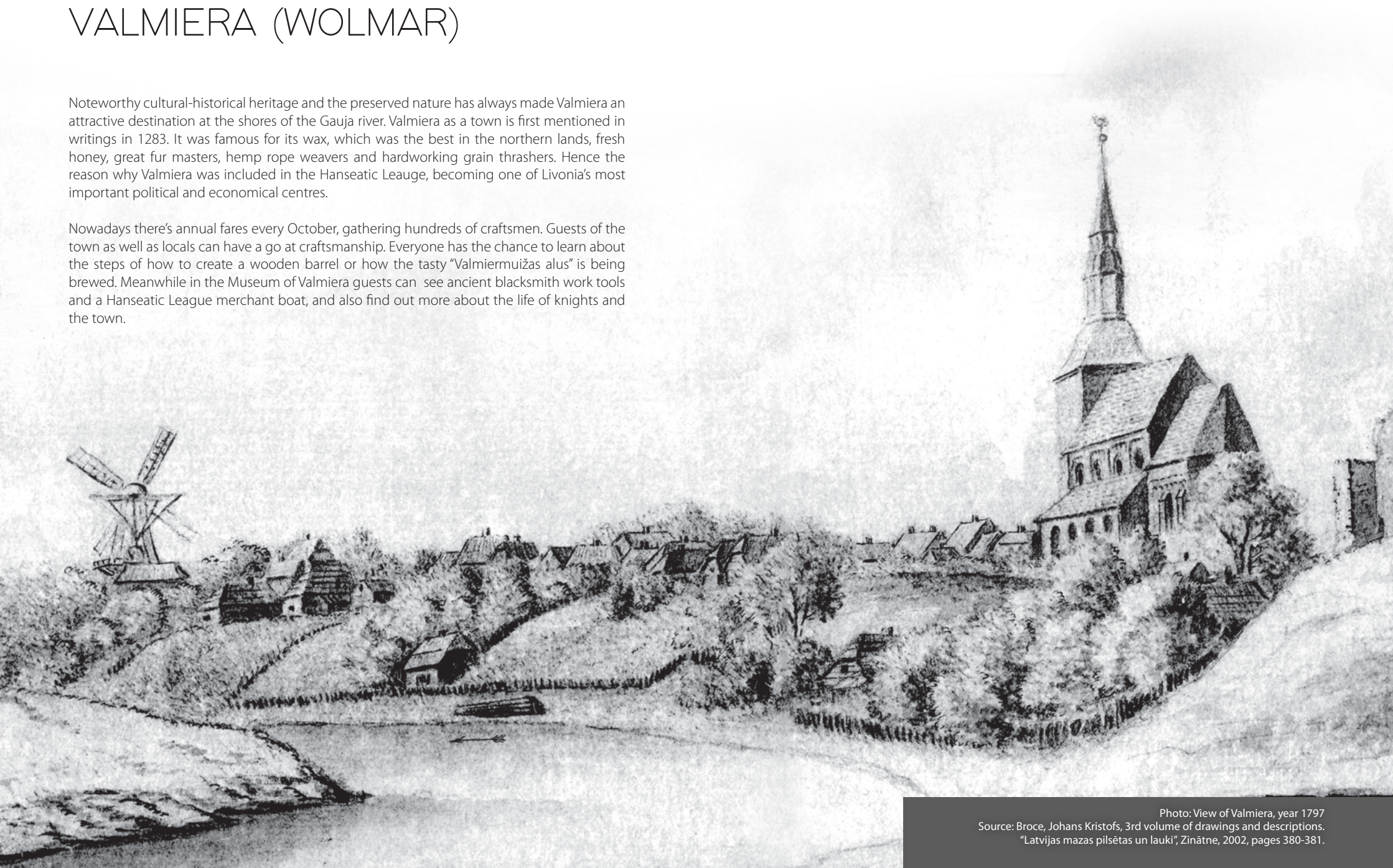


Photo: View of Valmiera, year 1797  
Source: Broce, Johans Kristofs, 3rd volume of drawings and descriptions.  
"Latvijas mazas pilsētas un lauki", Zinātne, 2002, pages 380-381.



# MEDIEVAL CITY

Cities in Livonia were established in the 12th and 13th century, when the German land merchants and later also the crusaders arrived. They were acting according to their life and started to create a new space for life – a city.

In medieval times, for the city to receive a city status, it had to fulfil various requirements. The city had to have a castle, a fence or wall, a church, windmills and a town square. The quality of a city residents life was largely dependent on the market. It was shaping to become the main social centre and quite often was regarded as the heart of the city. People were not only shopping or selling their items, but also found out about news, newest laws, saw the newest tendencies in fashion and were watching shows and other performances. In Valmiera the city was governed by the council, formed by the burgomaster, three or four lords, a writer and the city judge.

In order to reach Valmiera, people had to travel by land, which was surrounded by a swampy and dense forest. Travelers could also use the Gauja river route, which was likely used by committees, who were inspecting the usefulness and development of the city and castles. The city was surrounded by a high wall, behind which the residents of Valmiera had settled. Nowadays the former city wall borders can be walked through in less than an hour. In medieval times the Livonian Order castle was guarded by two towers, a deep ditch filled with water and thick castle walls made of stone. It was the place where the greats of Livonia and guests met and discussed important questions regarding politics, military and everyday life.

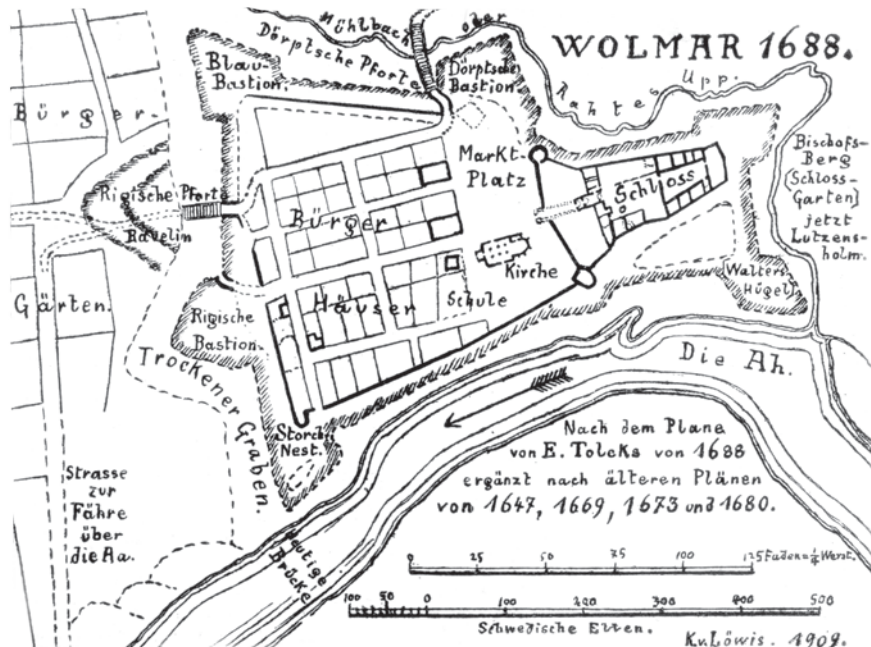


Photo: Old Valmiera, year 1688

The initial appearance of the Valmiera St. Simanis church is unknown. It's possible it was smaller and built in the Gothic style. The church was surrounded by the city cemetery, which was located there until the second half of the 18th century. In 1523 Martin Luther sent a message to Rīga "To all the dear and chosen friends of God, all christians in Rīga, Rēvele and Terbata, Livland, to my dear lords and brothers of Christ". The first active preachers of Luther's doctrines came to Valmiera in 1526 and in 1554 Valmiera was the first city outside Rīga to accept the verdict of freedom of faith.



The coat of arms of Valmiera is one of the oldest among the coat of arms of cities in Latvia. The first known coat of arms shows a tilia with hanging shields, decorated with the cross of the German order. It shows the city's subordination to the German or Livonian order. Up until modern days the significance of the tilia is still unknown, since it is not a common symbol in this region. The coat of arms confirmed, that the city has established an administration system – council, and it has its own city rights and privileges. The first changes in the coat of arms of Valmiera were made in the beginning of 17th century, when the authority of the city was taken over by chancellor of Sweden Aksel Uksensern.



# VALMIERA IN MEDIEVAL HANSA



Hansa – a merchant union, which was based on varying economical and political interests of merchants from different territories. Closer relationships often were established in a space of united languages and similar cultures. Valmiera was an active member of the Hansa from the 14th until the 16th century.

Up until now the most common notion about Hansa as a historical union, where a city joins it and later withdraws from it, is outdated. More and more researches show that cities did not join or withdraw from Hansa by signing a specific agreement. It was a flowing system, in which the merchants of certain cities were either working or not working in it. Hence the city also had the opportunity to join Hansa. Livonia, the present territory of Latvia and southern Estonia, had 12 Hanseatic cities. Valmiera (Wolmar) was one of them. The presence of Hansa developed trade not only on an international level, but also contributed to the making of the inner trade between Livonian cities.

Valmiera was just a small star in the "Hanseatic constellation", but it still had an important role in the success of the Hanseatic network. The beneficial location between the largest cities in Livonia – Riga, Tallinn and Tartu, a day's journey away from Cēsis, where the residence of the German Order master was located, and near the residences of the Archbishop of Riga in Limbaži and Turaida – this allowed Valmiera to become a convenient ground for meetings. Nowadays it is known that there were at least 32 meetings of various importance organized in Valmiera in the 15th and 16th century.

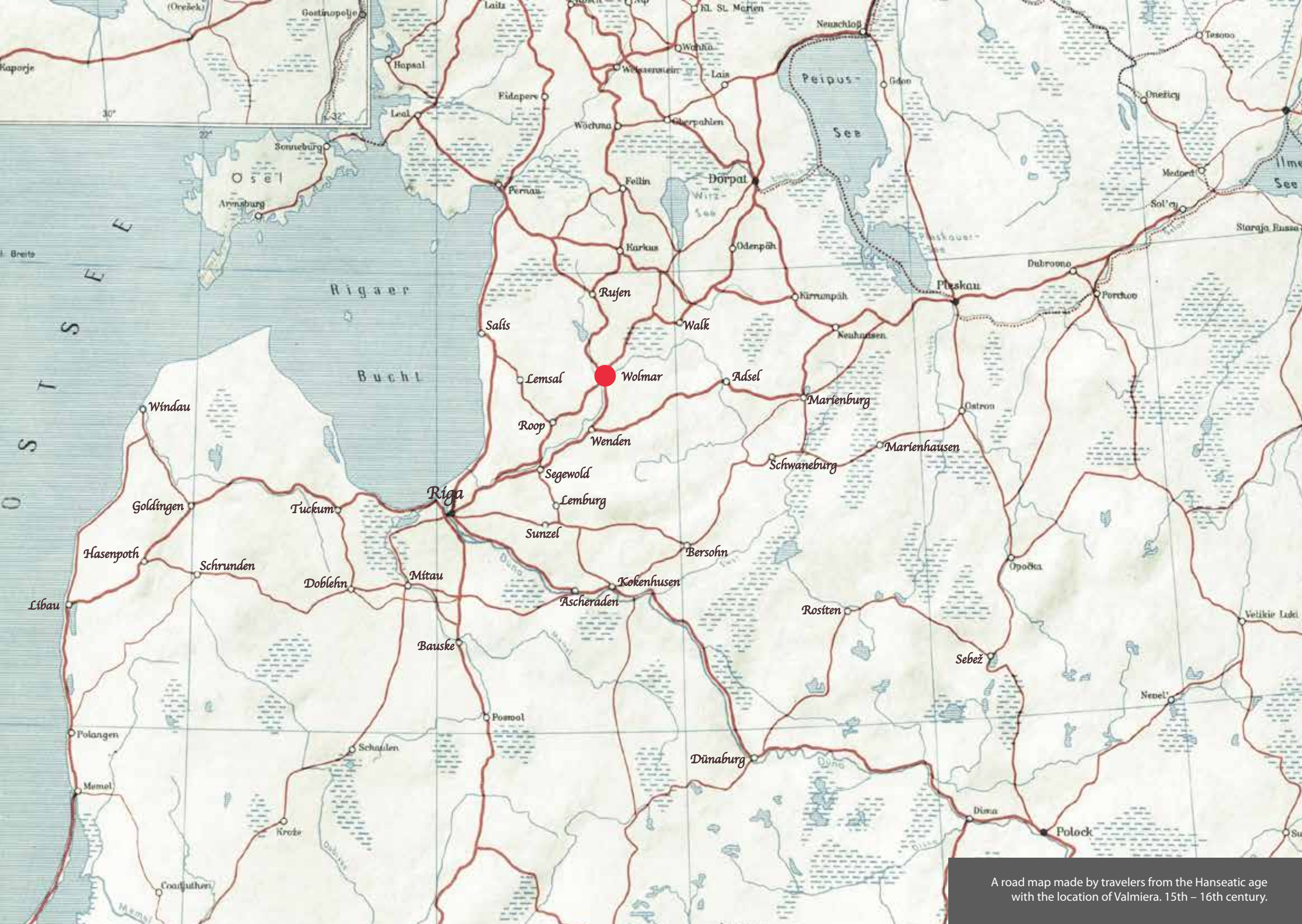


Like other small Hanseatic cities, Valmiera was rather a city of craftsmen than merchants. Based on the archaeological findings, it is known, that cobblers, tanners, blacksmiths, potters, bone handlers, spinners, weavers, fishermen and also musicians worked in Valmiera.

**Take a look at how life was in Valmiera during the Hanseatic League!**







A road map made by travelers from the Hanseatic age with the location of Valmiera. 15th – 16th century.



# VALMIERA IN THE NEW HANSA

Already in 1980 Valmiera along with other former Hanseatic cities received an invitation to participate in the first restored Hanseatic days in Zwolle, Netherlands, but the political regime denied this opportunity. However four centuries later Valmiera was again admitted in the Hanseatic League and since 1993 it annually takes part in the Hanseatic days. Just like in medieval times, when Hansa was not only a small society of merchants, it also connects and changes everyone who is close to it. *"Hansa yesterday – tomorrow it will be something else"* Rainer Postel.

As a result of the evidence of the Hanseatic period and historical research, the content of the new Valmiera castle cultural environment center is being created, discovering the city during the period from the 13th to the 18th century. The exposition will cognitively and interactively cover four content topics: the city and the townspeople; Valmiera and the Hanseatic League; Valmiera castle; spiritual life and worldview.

For example, *Lodges of Hansa*, which is a place for trading, for small exhibitions and creative workshops in events in the city and museums. By visiting the Valmiera Tourism and Information Centre (Valmiera TIC), every guest has the opportunity to become a merchant – take a photo next to the Hanseatic ship – koge. The city has received a research about the history of Valmiera during the Hanseatic times.



One of the goals of the modern Valmiera is to not forget its past, connect it to the present in the name of the future. Be proud of what we were before, what we are now and we will be in years to come. This is the reason, why Hansa has a large part in the development of the city's image. In 2000 *The Wall of Hansa* was painted; In 2003 a coin with the symbolics of Valmiera joined the coin union of Hanseatic cities; In 2011 Valmiera regained the ancient boat dock, which likely hosted boats in medieval times.

The museum visitors have the opportunity to participate in several educational programs that have developed during the project:

- School of Knights, where it is possible to get acquainted with the main groups of society and feel like a knight;
- Tea program, which reveals the secrets of medicinal plants growing in Latvia;
- Historical costume game "Painting of a medieval city", where you can get acquainted with imitations of medieval costumes by applying in advance.

Guests of Valmiera have the opportunity to get acquainted with medieval society, cuisine and fashion via educational lectures.

The restaurants of Valmiera and the surrounding counties include old tastes in modern interpretations in their menus produced with local products and raw ingredients.



# CLOTHING

Clothing has had a special part all throughout history. No wonder the quote by the rhetorician Quintilian (c.35 – c.100 AD): *"Clothing makes a human"* (*vestis virum reddit*) has stood the test of time.

The medieval times are often referred to as the dark period of history, the reasoning for that being not only because of spiritual human darkness, but also because of a physical lack of light. Clothing, festivities, knight tournaments in the developed and late medieval times, when the Livonian cities were active members of the Hansa, were very gorgeous and full of color.

The clothing of the king could not be and was not allowed to be worn by a farmer and vice versa. Clothing had a very big role and meaning. It served as symbol that divided the parts of society. In the production of costumes a very wide range of fabrics from natural materials was used. These materials were made locally and also brought over from the East and Western Europe. The costumes were diverse, and each court tried to show off with a fashion trend. Wool, linen, silk, cotton, cloth, velvet, taffeta, damascus and fur were all used very widely. Silk, golden, silver, wool, cotton and linen threads were used. The clothing was decorated with glass pearls and jewels. Metal, wooden, ore clips as well as buckles and needles were used as fasteners.



Merchants and craftsmen of Hansa often were wealthy, but not of noble origin, which, of course, caused discontent from the nobles. In order to at least slightly follow the rules of social parts, color, fabric, quality decorating rules for clothing were established. It limited the options for the city residents to dress similarly to the nobles. All parts of society met in the city, and also the color palette of the clothing ranged from grey, green and brown, worn by farmers and lower ranking city residents, to blue and pastel tones, linen and cotton tones. The low quality wool fabric belonged to the craftsmen and average city residents. The highest quality purple and gold, silk and fine wool fabric in red, yellow, blue and and special green tone belonged to the noble, lords and rich merchants. Fur was worn only by the rich residents, Jewellery was also only owned by people of the highest part of society. Glass and silver jewellery was also found in Valmiera. Of course, the townsmen and craftsmen also wore jewellery, but it had a more functional purpose. There is no exact information about clothing in Valmiera, just like it is for other Livonian cities. However, taking into account the tendencies and the strict clothing rules elsewhere it is reasonable to compare Valmiera and its residents.

Various rules for clothing could be found even in ancient Rome, in cities in the 14th century these trends reached their culmination. Largely it was because of the fact that cities were stabilizing as new living spaces. The city had its own rules. Your birth status was no longer most important, but rather, whether you were able to earn some money and produce something *"Money is the lord of the city"* Jacques Le Goff.





## ENTERTAINMENT AND EVERYDAY LIFE

Medieval society was very religious and thought a lot about providing food for themselves, but there was also a place for different entertainments which had nothing to do with religion. Only in a medieval city a man learned how to really laugh and have a good time, because before that laughing was associated with something foolish and evil. People were happy to enjoy themselves by playing music, listening to it, dancing, playing and watching theatre. Actors gained a new role. They were professional at tricks, singing, playing theatre and musical instruments, declaiming etc. They traveled from cities to villages, from one castle to another without strings attached — in contrary to court musicians.

Like elsewhere in Europe, people of Livonia celebrated the same christian holidays. Every medieval holiday was about having a proper meal, drink and party. Celebrating manifested in pageants, carnivals, fairs which ended with theatre performance. The most referred holidays in Livonia was Easter, midsummer, Michaelmas, Dormition of the Mother God, day of three kings. October was known for fairs, because it was harvest time. Although holidays and everyday life were dictated by the church's calendar, in the cities of Hansa cultural life was contemporary, full of fun and loud.



Board games are the part of medieval entertainment. One of the most popular games was so called game of dice. In XIV century people from every layer of society were playing it so Church banned this game with by law. This kind of dice was part of archaeological findings in Valmiera - they were found in the castle, in the city and outside of it - on Lutsa's manor territory.

It is interesting that the studies currently carried out on the cities of Livonia's Hansa lead to the conclusion that St. Anne was worshiped in the cities of Hansa — on her day there were big fairs. There seemed to be three major fairs in Valmiera: on St. Anne Day, on Michaelmas and St. Simon Day. The city-dweller, who was heavily dependent on the markets, was preparing for them seriously and with ambition. The wealth of the fair and how many different merchants came to the fair determined how full and diverse the contents of the pantry chamber would be.

In Balthasar Russow's chronicles from 1584 -

*"The day-to-day business of lords is: hunting, playing dice and other games, driving and riding from wedding to wedding, from Baptism to Baptism, from dinner to dinner, and from fair to fair, from one church festival to the next. Although the castles and manors were quite large, weddings and other festive occasions took place in the cities where the Guild's houses were built for that purpose at the time. The guests were invited three months earlier, most of them from all over the world. Actors were also discharged from other cities. You could get a lot of fun if you get actors."*



In modern days Valmiera city festival happens around St. Anne's day. There you can find extensive fair and activities for both children and grown-ups. As St. Simons day approaches Valmiera holds Simjud's fair in which craftsmen from Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania participate. Different types of cultural events and entertainment are taking place during market days, maintaining the best traditions of the market.





# CULINARY

Up until the end of the 15th century, when Columbus reached America, people in Europe were not familiar with a range of products, that are widely used nowadays. Cooking without tomatoes, potatoes, turkey meat, sugar and chocolate nowadays seems quite impossible. Just like with clothing, food also had special rules – what, who and how much one could consume.

Thanks to the Hansa merchants in medieval times, various regional dishes became more widely known. In their journeys merchants did not only get to know local dishes and condiments, but also brought over home new recipes and the necessary produce, that with time became a part of the local menu. Since a long lasting storing of produce was needed, because the merchant trips both on land and water could last for weeks, conserving skills were developing during the medieval times. The most popular methods were - salting, parching or drying the food.

There is no medieval cooking book from Valmiera, however based on the travelers writings and archaeological findings it is possible to determine, what were the food products and dishes, that were the most popular amongst the citizens of Valmiera and other people from Livonian cities.

Grain crops and legume were used the most in food (rye, barley, oats, wheat, peas, beans, rice) for the purpose of making porridge and chowder. Buckwheat was also found in Valmiera. Grains were used not only for porridges, but also for producing breads and buns. Sweet rolls and cakes were popular items. White bread was in the diet of the highest members of society, but rye bread was intended for farmers.



People gladly used the locally available food. Most of the condiments were brought in from abroad and therefore were expensive. Even in modern days there is still the saying "Spicy prices", which comes from the Hanseatic times, when peppers were really one of the most expensive, but desirable condiments. People knew and gladly used ginger, parsley, caraway, horseradish, onions, garlic, saffron, cinnamon, sage, peppermint, fennel and dill. The food in medieval times tasted sweet and sour, and a bit spicy.

Wine was considered an exclusive item. The favorites were Burgundy wine, Malvasian wine, the most popular was the Rhenish, southern fruits and sugar. The so called golden dishes (meat dishes smeared with saffron or curry) were only allowed to eat by the nobles, and only the wealthiest members of society could afford them. Residents of Livonia soon realized, that importing wine is expensive and found a way to make wine from local berries. Making wine from various berries is also popular in Latvia nowadays: from strawberries, rowan, blackberries, raspberries etc. Southern winemakers tend to not consider these drinks as wine, but the locals continue this tradition. People used to drink beer and honey beer as well. Historical sources do not say a lot about non alcoholic beverages, for example, juices. There is information about water drinking and even mandatory norms for what professions deserve clean water.



Some sources of information say, that traditionally Hanseatic cities raised cattle. Many bones from cattle have been found in Valmiera, which confirms this information. Traditionally in cities it was more common to use meat from small cattle and birds. People from Valmiera also ate meat from hunting, proof for that being the bones in archaeological excavations. The nearby river provided the city with fish, river crayfish, pikes, chubs, asp, breams and perch. There have also been findings of seawater fish skeletons, which leads to believe, that the city had access to a variety of seawater fish. There was a wide range of fish in the Livonia territory: sturgeons, salmon, pikes, eels, seawater zool and tenches, perch and bream. Herrings, cods were likely brought in from the Northern Sea.

Fruits were more often used during festivities. Apples, plums, pears and sour cherries were available in this region. But even here there were rules about in which festivities and who was allowed to serve certain fruits. Maidservants were not allowed to serve pears during weddings. For good things, various berries were dehydrated and later candied fruits were made.

Green salads were not uncommon in medieval times. Only the stock was from what was more available. Salads were often made from what we in modern terminology would call weeds: goose-foot, nettles, and adding condiments, for example, almonds. The appetizers are also not a modern trend. The Hanseatic menu says, that before a meal one must eat sweetened caraway, because it improves the appetite.





Restaurant "Rātes vārti"

## HANSA'S CHEF'S MASTERPIECE

- Rye bread
- 50 g of butter
- 50 g of meadow honey
- homemade ice-cream (but you can also buy an ice-cream)
- seasonal berries

### HOW TO MAKE IT?

Slice the bread in triangles and fry them on a pan adding 50 g of butter. Then add 50 g of honey (it needs to be softer so it makes the right bouquet with a bread!) and continue frying until everything is umber.

Put it in a dish and add some fresh berry sauce blended with a bit of sugar and ice-cream. Decorate with garden flowers and peppermint.

Flavor bouquet will be even better with a half glass of semi-sweet white wine.

Bon appetit and welcome to Valmiera!