

About the “Lietuvos Valsčiai” series

Established in 1994 the Versmė Publishing House, a serial book publisher, is dealing with preparation and publishing of monograph series only under the title of “Lietuvos Valsčiai” devoted for Lithuania’s Millennium celebrated in 2009—the same year as the present book appears—and dedicated to other anniversaries of events important to the state, its towns, settlements and parishes.

The “Lietuvos Valsčiai” series is included into the Programme for the Millennium of Lithuania approved on 2 December 1999 by the State Commission on the Millennium of the Name of Lithuania.

The title of the series is not accidental: the rural districts called *valsčiai* formed in Lithuania in mid-19th century and abolished in 1950 were the smallest and rather stable administrative territorial units, which had united the people of the same ethnical culture (e.g., the boundaries of *valsčiai* and parishes, as well as dialect areas coincided).

Based on reminiscences of people, archive data, scientific studies, written sources and material, each serial book is being written by large teams consisting of up to 115 authors, prominent Lithuanian historians, archaeologists, ethnologists, folklorists, linguists, sociologists, naturalists, local lore investigators et al. Total number of authors is more than 1,400 with more than 200 persons holding scientific degrees (see www.versme.lt).

The “Lietuvos Valsčiai” series is a multi-volume edition about Lithuania’s towns, townships, villages, homesteads, landscapes and their history from the olden times to the present days, about independence fights, traditional culture, trades, calendar and family traditions, custom laws, folk wisdom, churches, celebrities, features of dialects and local sub-dialects, folklore, ethnical minorities and their traditions etc.

‘Gruzdžiai’ is the seventeenth monograph two-volume book in the ‘Lietuvos Valsčiai’ series dedicated to the 375th anniversary (in 2011) of Gruzdžiai. The following series have appeared before: ‘Žagarė’ (the 1st monograph in the series dedicated to the 800th anniversary of Žagarė, 1998, 912 p.)—the first book in Lithuania issued with the Millennium of Lithuania logo, ‘Obeliai. Kriaunos’ (the 2nd, for the 480th anniversary of Obeliai, 1998, 864 p.), ‘Plateliai’ (the 3rd, for the 550th anniversary of Plateliai, 1999, 800 p.), ‘Žiobiškis’ (the 4th, for the 200th anniversary of Žiobiškis parish, 2000, 1,024 p.), ‘Širvintos’ (the 5th, for the 525th anniversary of Širvintos, 2000, 776 p.), ‘Lygumai. Stačiūnai’ (the 6th, for the 90th anniversary of Stačiūnai parish, 2001, 896 p.), ‘Veliuona’ (the 7th, for the 500th jubilee of the date Veliuona was granted with the Magdeburg Law, 2001, 1,176 p.), ‘Raguva’ (the 8th, for the 500th jubilee of Raguva 2001, 1,128 p.), ‘Seredžius’ (the 9th, for the 710th anniversary of Seredžius, 2003, 1,238 p.), ‘Kvėdarna’ (the 10th, for the 675th anniversary of Kvėdarna, 2004, 1,160 p.), ‘Papilė’ (the 11th, for the 665th anniversary of Papilė, the Part I, 2004, 1,082 p.; Parts II and III, 2006, 752 p.), ‘Tauragnai’ (the 12th, for the 750th jubilee of Tauragnai, 2005, 1,364 p.), ‘Musninkai. Kernavė’, ‘Čiobiškis’ (the 13th, for the anniversaries of Musninkai (445th), Kernavė (725th) and Čiobiškis (475th), 2005, 1,304 p.), ‘Laukuva’ (14th, for the 750th jubilee of Laukuva, Part I, 2005, 924 p.; Part II, 2008, 950 p.), ‘Gelvonai’ (the 15th, for the 625th anniversary of Gelvonai, 2009, 1,384 p.), ‘Baisogala’ (the 16th, for the 470th anniversary of Baisogala, 2009, 1,056 p.). Total number of pages of these 17 monograph books published (19 volumes) together with the maiden soft-cover book issued under the title ‘Sintautai. Žvirgždaičiai’ (1996, 430 p.) is 20,220 pages.

The celebration of the Millennium of the first reference to Lithuania in written historical sources is reasonable to relate with more modest jubilees of its towns and townships and give an implication to these anniversaries of their first written reference by a written word—a book.

In pre-war Lithuania there were more than 400 rural districts (*valsčiai*), which were later replaced by neighbourhoods (*seniūnijos*) numbering now about 300. With a hope that our capacities will enable us to publish books about the majority of them, we kindly invite culture institutions, district governments, neighbourhoods, local activists, local lore investigators, state men, culture activists, sponsors and all writers to join, without hesitation, the team preparing and publishing the “Lietuvos Valsčiai” series. A great work to last several decades is waiting for you.