

The Green Maiden of Dundaga Castle

At that time the castle of Dundaga belonged to the family of fon Maidel. Baron Otto Ernest fon Maidel and his wife Anna Sibilla had no descendants – potential heirs to the castle and the region, which upset the baron very much.

Once hunting, the baron got lost in the Blue Hills. At that time the king of dwarfs dwelled in David's castle. Forcing his way through the wood, the baron came across the dwarfs who showed him the way to Dundaga. Though, the dwarfs asked to praise their help – they wanted the permission of the baron to

celebrate the wedding party of their king's son in the big hall of the castle. The baron had to promise that none of the finite beings would see or disturb it, whereas the dwarfs promised happiness, wealth and an heir for the baron. On the eve of the coming wedding night the baron issued an order which claimed that all the inhabitants of the castle should go to their rooms before the sunset and stay there until dawn. The order said that disobedience would lead to a punishment – immuring alive in the wall of the castle.

In the castle there lived a girl, who was a remote relative to the baron and always wore green clothes. Everybody called her the Green Maiden. The girl was in love with the gardener's son she was not allowed to meet and marry with, therefore the maid dated with her beloved secretly.

On the eve of the wedding night of the dwarfs' prince the Green Maiden had a date in the castle park. Returning back, she saw some light in the windows of the big hall and was taken over by an irresistible desire to peep through the key hole and see what was going on there.

In one of the sides of the hall there were nicely laid tables with comfortable chairs next to them. Two of the chairs were decorated with green leaves and flowers. In one of the sides of the hall there was a podium where tiny musicians were playing their instruments. The door of the hall opened and solemnly in came strange small smartly-dressed people. They were coming in couples – the ladies and the gentlemen. The first couple was followed by the bride and the bridegroom in wedding gowns. All this seemed so beautiful that the Green Maiden laughed and clapped her hands. Then at once everything went dark and silent.

Next morning the baron went to the dwarfs' king for the promised prize, but the dwarf said, "You have broken your promise. One of your people saw our celebration. You have to punish this person. And – you will not have descendants in the future..."

The baron started looking for the person to be blamed and found a green shoe next to the door of the hall... So, according to the issued order, the Green Maiden was immured in the wall of the castle tower alive. Yet, being very curious, she still sometimes takes part in the pace of the castle inhabitants showing her presence in various ways.



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- place for organizing seminars, conferences, banquets
- possibility to stay overnight at the youth hostel in the castle
- opportunity to get acquainted with the castle and obtain more information about it
- opportunity to get acquainted with other places of North Kurzeme region



Information:

Ph.: +371-3237860, +371-3237858,

fax +371-3232294,

E-mail: tic@dundaga.lv, pils@dundaga.lv

www.dundaga.lv

Address: Pils iela 14, Dundaga, Talsu rajons,

Latvia, LV-3270

Prepared by

Dundaga Municipality Council

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Translated by Sandra Salceviča



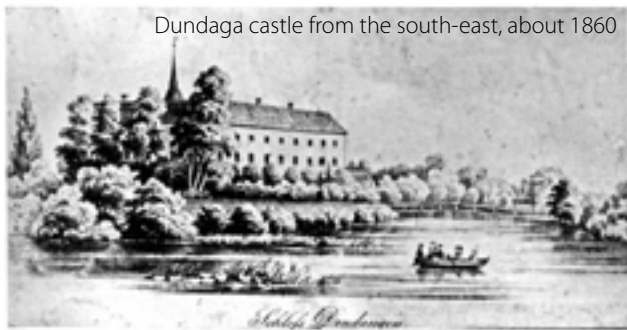
The name of Dundaga has first been mentioned in the historic sources in 1245 when Nicolay, the bishop of Riga, presented 200 arkli (1800 hectares) of land to his chapter of priests.

The building of the castle dates back to the third quarter of the 13th century. The oldest survived written document which mentioned Dundaga castle for the first time was dated by the year 1318 and it was connected with the attack towards the castle provoked by the Order, i.e., German conquerers themselves.



The Castle of Dundaga

Dundaga castle from the south-east, about 1860



The castle is situated on the peninsula washed by the raised waters of the Pace river. Completely built castle consisted of three living blocks. The middle block faced the land and ended with an artificially made protecting moat. The side blocks were shorter and the ends of them were connected by a rampart thus forming a close courtyard. Behind the rampart opposite the peninsula there was the front castle with surrounding walls and gate tower.

The picture is taken from H.Pirang's book, author unknown



The courtyard of the castle during the 1st half of the 19th century

The castle served for household needs as a storehouse for agricultural products before they were delivered to the consumers in Riga. Similar castles were built by Riga Dome chapter of priests in their possessions as well.

After numerous arguments between Riga Dome chapter of priests and Kursa bishopric the castle was sold to Kursa bishopric in 1434. At that time it was rebuilt significantly to strengthen its defence.

In 1559 during the Livonian war the bishop of Kursa sold Dundaga castle to the king of Denmark who on his part presented it to his brother Magnus, the duke of Holstein. Magnus was the last bishop in Kurzeme.

The castle of Dundaga has twice suffered in warfare. First, it endured the war of Piltene bequest, which started between Denmark and Poland in 1583. The castle then belonged to the Hungarian magnate, the Sevenhills chancellor of the Polish king, Martin Bersewitz, who had bought it from duke Magnus in 1582. In 1588 Bersewitz sold it to the councillor of Brandenburg markcount, Lewin fon Bülow.

The castle survived the Polish-Swedish war in 1656 when it was conquered by the Swedes after the artillery shelling. At that time the castle belonged to Otto Ernst fon Maydell who managed to regain it for lots of money by giving the Swedish king Karl X Gustave a vote of loyalty.

The 17th century in Kurzeme and Dundaga appeared to be not only the time of wars and devastation, but also a very active building period. One of the most remarkable was fon Maydell family. The flourish of Dundaga happened to fall into the years of the energetic leadership of Anna Sibylla. Around 1685 the eastern block, the new chapel and other premises of the castle were built.



Lithography of V.S.Stavenhagen, published in 1860

Being a childless widow, Anna Sibylla devised Dundaga to her nephew Ewald fon der Osten-Sacken from Bate estate.

Osten-Sacken family managed in Dundaga from 1714 until 1920 when the agrarian reform started.

Around 1785 important reconstruction took place in the castle. At that time one of the most outstanding members of Osten-Sacken family, Karl fon der Osten-Sacken, was managing there. The layout of the castle was changed, the third storey was built and the inner rooms rebuilt. A new stone church was built in Dundaga in the place of the old wooden one.

Dundaga castle caught fire on April 1st 1872, and it burnt down



The courtyard of the castle, 2000, photo by V.Biezbārdis

completely. Thirty-three years later during the revolution of 1905 on the night of December 1st the castle was burnt down by the revolting peasants. The reconstruction work continued until 1914 and was partly completed, when the 1st World War discontinued it.

After the war the castle became a manor-house managed by the state. In 1924 the self-government of Dundaga district became its owner. At the end of July 1926 the Town hall was opened in the castle and the self-government moved from Jaundundaga to the centre.

From 1945 till December 1974 the secondary school was situated in Dundaga castle.

Today the castle is again the property of the self-government, and Dundaga Art and music school, Culture centre, Tourism information centre and Youth hostel are situated there.

The north-western facade and Pils Street, 1998, photo by V.Biezbārdis

