

From the House into the World

The Life of Wooden-ware Making
and Peddling Families in the Ribnica
Valley in the 20th Century.



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Introduction

Polona Rigler Grm, curator

The project *The Life of Wooden-ware Making and Peddling Families in the Ribnica Valley in the 20th Century*, which took place between 2004 and 2010, combines research, an exhibition, parlour games, workshops, digital content and a catalogue. With this, we aimed to highlight primarily the social culture, which had often been neglected in the past. In 2004, we invited Dr Irena Rožman, a researcher and ethnologist, to take part in the project and conduct a research, which served as the foundation for the content of the project.

The catalogue *From the House into the World* features the man from Ribnica – a peasant, worker, wooden-ware maker and peddler – and his family. Both the exhibition and the catalogue present the social culture of handcrafted wooden ware from Ribnica. Individuals as supporters of this living heritage are pointed up. The core is made up of the family, which is based on reproduction, social strata, survival and economy, as well as mutual help. The entire story is supplemented by survival strategies of families, presented through photographs, postcards and archival materials. The content gains an added value through extracts from stories told in the local dialect.

Audio recordings in the local dialect, which had been recorded as part of the research, were available throughout the exhibition, along with a workshop about the dialect and some parlour games. The entire content of the exhibition stimulates the appreciation of cultural heritage.

Between June 2006 and October 2009, the exhibition was on view at the Ribnica Castle. In 2008, the exhibition, the audio recordings and the memory game were digitized and entire multimedia content can now be viewed on the museum's website (www.miklovahisa.si/muzej).

The catalogue, as the final stage of the project, reflects the family life as well as the culture and the lifestyle of people from Ribnica in the 20th century.

Without altruistic cooperation of people working in our profession, the library and the museum, and of people who have either born witness to the stories from the past or donated objects or photographs, the house would be desolate, empty and without any stories to tell. The juice of every single individual has borne fruit, which will feed the soul of the Ribnica man and will present his image to the world.

A Foreword

Dr Irena Rožman, ethnologist

I remember very well how I left my home in Novo mesto on 17 October 2005 to move to Ribnica for eight months. I would talk to the local people in the villages around Ribnica to collect information about the different means of how wooden-ware making and peddling families made a living. At a later time, when I was transcribing audio recording of the conversations I had had, I was suddenly surprised to realize that ethnologists' fieldwork could in many ways be equated with the work of peddlers.

We leave *from the house into the world* poor, but we come home richer – with new knowledge and acquaintances, experiences and adventures, and, *kruota*¹, if luck is on our side, with some leftover money. Both an ethnologist and a peddler can call themselves successful if they have got: firstly, a *tongue* (which they can use well when speaking), secondly, excuse my expression, a *pig-like stomach*, so they can eat everything they get either in inns or from farmers, and thirdly, *dog-like legs* so they can, like dogs, make it to just about every house even if it is a bit off the beaten track.

I was invited to the Ribnica Valley to conduct the research by Vesna Horžen, the manager of the Miklova Hiša Museum, and Polona Rigler Grm², the museum curator. It was early, during our first conversation when we realized that not enough was known about the social background of the everyday life of wooden-ware makers and hawkers or peddlers. Researchers had previously only conducted systematic studies of certain areas of the material and spiritual existence world of people from Ribnica. The following topics and aspects in particular have been documented well: wooden ware (technical processes of wooden-ware making, wooden ware itself, the geographical extent of wooden-ware making), folk songs (Zmaga Kumer, *Folk Music among Rim-makers and Potters in the Ribnica Valley*. Maribor: Obzorja Publishing House, 1968; Zmaga Kumer, Drago Kunej, Mirko Ramovš, *From Ribnica to Rakitnica* [Audio recording]: Folk Songs and Music in the Ribnica Valley. Ljubljana: The Institute of Ethnomusicology of the Scientific Research Centre of the Slovene Academy of Sciences and Arts, Hrovača: Škrabčeva hiša, Ribnica: Miklova hiša, 2003), and even storytelling (Fran Miličinski, ed., and Hinko Smrekar, illustrations, *Wooden Ware*. Ljubljana: Založba umetniške propagande / Art Propaganda Publishing House, 1919).

However, not everything has been told about the everyday life, in particular about the different ways of how families and individuals

¹ In the past, *krousta* (from the Slovene word *krota*, which means *a toad*) was every second word one could hear in Ribnica.

² Financial support was provided by the Municipality of Ribnica; the organization requesting financial support was the Miklova Hiša Museum.

in the Ribnica Valley made a living. The exception to this is a scientific research work by Dr Polona Šega, who devoted her attention to a systematic and in-depth study of the way of life of hot chestnut sellers and hawkers or peddlers from Ribnica (*Slovene Hot Chestnut Sellers in Vienna: Inhabitants of the Former District of Velike Lašče as Hot Chestnut Sellers in the Imperial City*. Novo mesto, Dolenjska Založba Publishing House, 1997; *The Way of Life of Hawkers from the Ribnica Valley in the 19th and 20th Centuries: Doctoral Dissertation*. Ljubljana, 1999). Within the ethnological context of the concept of the way of life (making a living and thinking) one can also read about the life stories of some individuals, members of various generations, social groups and professions (Majda Slabe, ed. – collector, Mojca Ramšak, the author of the additional text, and Vesna Horžen, ed., *Life Stories from the Ribnica Valley*. Ribnica: Občina / Municipality, 2003). To sum up: the works mentioned above deal either with individual cultural components (wooden ware, folk poetry, etc.), or the way of life of hot chestnut sellers and hawkers, the so-called primary occupational groups, who are creators of the cultural identity of the Ribnica Valley both in Slovenia and abroad.

My task was to conduct a study on the »social culture«, which would shed light on the life of wooden-ware makers and peddlers; there had namely been sufficient information available about what kind of ware was made, how and what the ware was made from, how and where it was sold and what the way of life of peddlers was like. I decided to research the entire way of life of wooden-ware making and peddling families throughout history in connection with the social changes, of course within the context of objective possibilities.

»Social culture« is a complex concept, which is in ethnology used to describe various components of everyday life; according to the ethnological system, »social culture« consists of neighbourly relations, family life, customs and traditions, mutual help and much more. The task I had been given was thus anything but simple, as I had to define the object of my study in such a manner that I would be able to study all those aspects of everyday life that are defined by the concept of »social culture« through the selected phenomenon. After careful consideration and a survey interview with Mr Lovšin, a rake maker from Hrovača, I made a decision – I knew I would get the most meaningful information about the social background of the daily life if I studied it through the perspective of family economy, which is after all what wooden-ware making and peddling were in the first place. This called for a methodological definition of the study; the aim was to deal with cultural forms and cultural components in connection with survival strategies of wooden-ware making and peddling families. Here is an example to give you a better idea: I was not interested in studying the national costumes as such, but only in connection with the family income and expenditure; likewise I was not

interested in holidays as such, but in connection with social differences which were manifested in festive food, clothing, etc. Such a starting point of the study, which was mainly dictated by the requirements of the Miklova Hiša Museum, where a new permanent exhibition is planned for the future, resulted in moving away from studying the cultural elements (the techniques of wooden-ware making, for example) and focusing more on connecting them with their holders (what did the division of labour among family members depend on, for example). A decision was made and in early November 2005 the study finally got its name: *Family Economy of Wooden-ware Making and Peddling Families in the Ribnica Valley in the 20th Century*.

After I had started to study the family economy of wooden-ware making and peddling families on the basis of available literature, two different sources of possible information unfolded: fieldwork on the one hand and various archives on the other hand. In the end, I nevertheless opted for fieldwork only, among other things because my work was limited by both time and of course also money. It was by no means realizable for me to work on both the archive and oral materials in an equal manner. At this point it also needs to be mentioned that the archive material (status animarum, civil registers, cadastres, population censuses and household records) would be a significant addition to the collected oral material, even more so if the decision was made to write a scientific monograph, which is a medium-term goal.

The fieldwork started as early as October 2005. I was assisted by part-time students of ethnology Vasja Pavlin, a local of Ribnica, and Sandra Jazbec. To begin with, I did interviews with the people, whose addresses I had been provided by the museum; not long after the list of people started to grow, which was a kind of a snowball effect. I talked to seventeen people who provided me with information, both men and women; I did twenty-four interviews and recorded thirty-one sixty-minute cassettes. As part of my fieldwork I also gained some photo material and together with the museum curator Polona Rigler Grm we also collected a number of objects and documents for the exhibition, such as: a marriage contract, a peddling licence, property sheets, wedding, children's and working clothing, farming tools, souvenirs brought home by peddlers, and many other things. All the collected items (many more exist out there, owned by the people) make for excellent material, which is partly presented in the catalogue as a pictorial supplement to the emerging monograph about the family lives of wooden-ware making and peddling families.

Basic study results are connected with different aspects of the family economy, with the management - as the people I have talked to would put it. Wooden-ware making and peddling were predominantly subsidiary economic activities; the foundation of the family economy however was farming, in particular livestock

breeding and forestry. The entire income earned by means of wooden-ware making and peddling was invested in farming, especially in purchasing land and agricultural equipment, whereby some families were able to considerably improve their living standards and climb up the social ladder. The economy of Ribnica was mixed – there were namely only a handful of true, so to say pure, wooden-ware makers, peddlers or farmers. Profitability of all activities depended on the global economic trends, which were dictated by the situation in the society at the time. On account of this, aforementioned economic activities, including emigration (to the USA, Germany), were profitable to varying degrees in different periods of history. Allow me to illustrate this with an example. After World War II, when industrial facilities were started to be set up in the Ribnica Valley, wooden-ware making and peddling were gradually abandoned. Large numbers of people were employed in facilities of the local industry, in particular in the golden era of socialism (the 1970s), and they invested their income in livestock breeding, which was at the time very profitable. However, when Slovenia gained independence, a number of workers – farmers – lost their jobs and livestock breeding thus lost on importance, and as a result it was gradually abandoned. Trade once again gained on significance on the global level and some families managed to take advantage of this niche; they returned to the traditional occupation – wooden-ware making and peddling, which now provides them with a means of making a living.

The main study results, which were in a highly generalized form presented as part of the *From the House into the World* exhibition, are summed up below:

- Even as early as the 19th century, there were only a handful of true (»pure«) farmers left – the survival strategies differed with respect to the social origin.
- In addition to farming, it was traditional to make a living by carrying out some other commercially attractive activities: wooden-ware making, peddling, gathering, selling the surplus ware to dealers and seasonal work, such as forest work.
- There was a co-existence of several different combinations of making a living in all social strata in the Ribnica Valley: farming, the cottage industry, hawking, emigration, and after World War II also work in industrial plants – as can be seen from the graphical presentation.
- Economic means changed through time and were adjusted to the national and global economic and ideological changes. For example: on account of the socialist ideology, which glorified the working class and restricted the development possibilities of crafts and trades, the employment within the developing local industry was on

the increase after World War II. There were fewer and fewer true wooden-ware makers left – at the time wooden ware was namely only made during after-work time; likewise peddling was also being given up. However, both activities bloomed again after Slovenia had gained its independence.

- Natural resources also dictated modes of the economy – limited possibilities for farming and favourable conditions for livestock breeding and forestry.
- In spite of other forms of making a living, farming was the primary activity and all the earnings made by wooden-ware making and peddling were invested in it.
- In comparison with other towns and villages in the Dolenjska Region, for example the villages of Suha krajina, Podgorje pri Novem mestu, the standard of living of people in Ribnica improved considerably on account of wooden-ware making and, even more so, peddling.
- As a result of having contact with foreign worlds, peddling families introduced various kinds of innovations, which improved the economy and the living standard, earlier than other families in Ribnica, and their lives were thus as a rule better than the lives of farmers – wooden-ware makers.
- The system of marrying (oral testimonies speak in favour of social and territorial endogamy) and mutual help represented significant forms of survival.
- The forms of economy in the valley differed from those in Slemenena (Slovene word for 'ridges'), mostly on account of natural resources. Peddling was more common in the valley, whereas in Slemenena it was mostly rim-making and livestock breeding.
- Even after World War II, emigration remained an extremely popular form of survival. In the 19th century people would mostly emigrate to the USA, whereas after World War II it was to Germany.
- Another new form of survival was employment of women, which affected the family relations, the division of labour between sexes, etc.

As part of my fieldwork I also came across a rather crude form of female hawking, which was done by women who would buy surplus ware from housewives and sell it at marketplaces in Slovene towns; the distances between the women's places of residence and the towns in question (Kočevje, Ljubljana, etc.) differed. Tradition also has it that there was a real female wooden-ware peddler from Kot, which was actually an exception to the rule

– peddling was namely distinctly male work. In view of everything that has been said I have come to the conclusion that the family economy of wooden-ware makers and peddlers depends on the set of possibilities which are defined by the connection between the state and local environments. To give an example: the subject of the ethnological study of families within the Municipality of Ribnica was »ways of family life«, which came to existence as a result of economical and social differences in connection with a broader social-historical context.

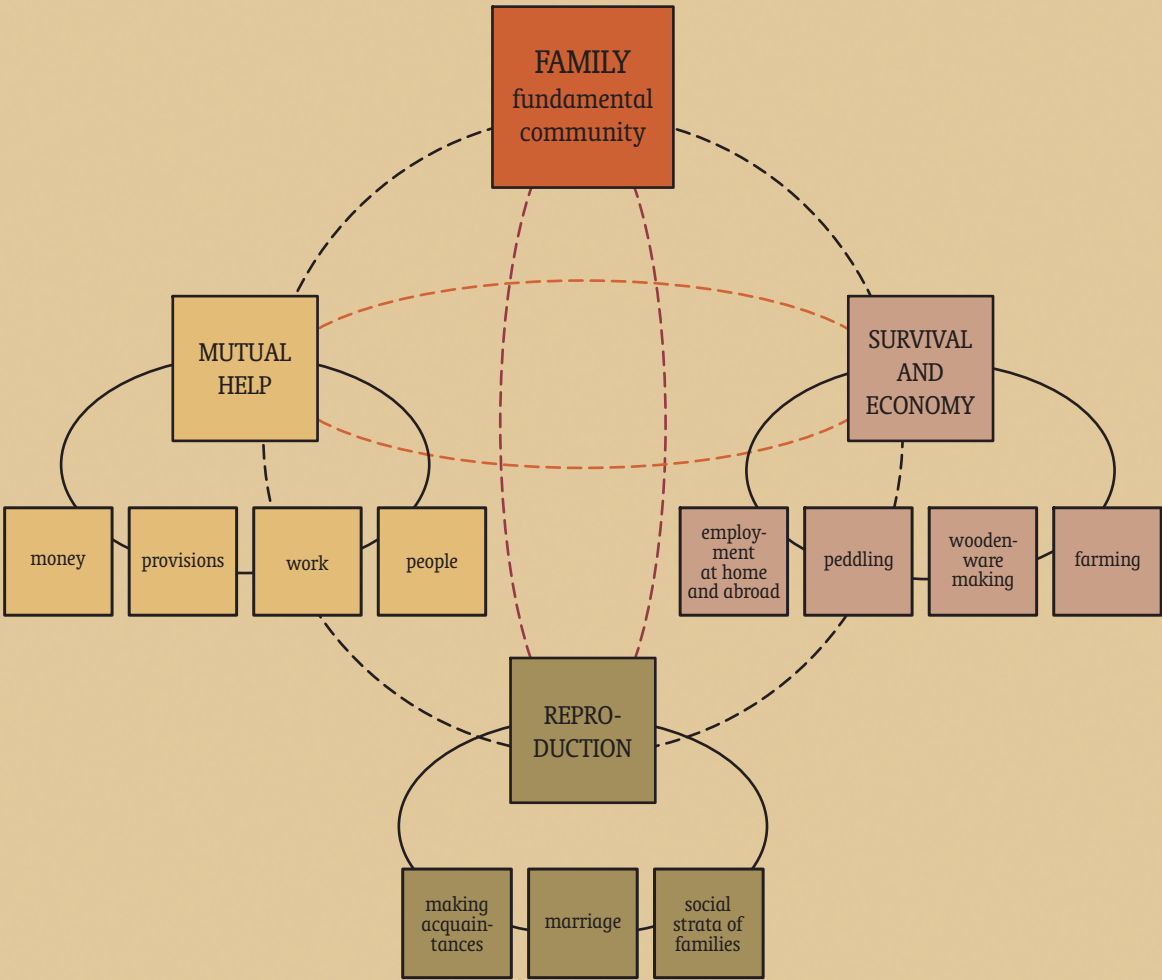
The aim of the study and the exhibition was thus in particular to present the sources and survival strategies of wooden-ware making and peddling families. We have not shed light solely on the economic means, such as farming, wooden-ware making, peddling and work in the local and foreign industries, but also on those strategies of providing a living which resulted from conditions of mixed economy: marriage relations, inheritance customs and rules of various kinds and forms of mutual help. A lot of emphasis was placed on mutual help provided among relatives, which was most evident in connection with the construction of houses, family crisis situations and other difficult moments in one's life (illness, death, property loss, land purchase, etc.). All of these strategies are clearly historically changeable, partly determined by the authorities and partly regulated collectively through agreements of people who were involved in farming, wooden-ware making and peddling. The contents have been divided in several sections – display panels, which are interwoven and dependant on one another: *Family, Making acquaintances and marriage, Social strata and status of families, Survival and family economy and Mutual help.*

Last but not least I would like to point out that I have been extremely satisfied with the cooperation with the employees of the Miklova Hiša Museum, who at the time restored my faith in good work relations. My sincere thanks go to all the employees of the Miklova Hiša Museum, in particular to my colleague Polona Rigler Grm, the manager of the museum Vesna Horžen and the library employees; you all provided me with invaluable help and showed a lot of understanding for any kind of difficulties. Thank you for the faith you had in me. I would also like to thank the people of Ribnica, who gave me a very warm welcome and a lot of presents, even though I was at times chilled to the bone during visits. This only goes to prove that the people of Ribnica are set in their own ways and will go to great lengths to save a bit of money. Thank you all.

The Life of Wooden-ware Making and Peddling Families in the Ribnica Valley in the 20th Century

A family is a fundamental social community, which meets the biological, social, economic and psychological needs of its members.

In the 20th-century Ribnica Valley, extended families, which consisted of grandparents, children, aunts, uncles and orphans, as well as hired hands, were still quite common. Altogether they formed a family-farming economy of peddling and wooden-ware making families. They would not have been able to survive, had relatives, neighbours, acquaintances and friends not helped one another.





Making acquaintances

Young people used to make acquaintances at Church holidays, on pilgrimages, on their way to the church and back home, at fairs and dances, in the village, at village festivities, and of course during collective peasant labour (e.g. threshing, corn husking etc.). At that time physical contact between the sexes was permitted, both girls and boys took pleasure in singing, dancing, flirting, and touching each other. The society conceded such behaviour, as long as it respected the old ways and customs which protected the female honour.



Under the village linden tree

*Fantje pa punce so hodila
ne srajdā vasi, pot lipo so
se zbralā, pa so kašno
rjaklā. Hecalā so se, ne.*

There was a linden tree in the middle of almost every village. Boys would often go there together with the village girls. They would hang out under the tree, chat away and make jokes.

Hanging out with the girls

*Al pa recimo u nedajlo
popoudne, pa so pār hišā
ble take kluopce zunaj, pa
so hodile punce polej ne
tisto kluopco sajst. Fantje
so pa polej zdravēn pršlā.*



There were benches outside the village houses. On Sunday afternoons girls would often come to sit there, while the boys would come and join them to hang out.

Dancing in the village inn

*Ne Štiefan dan smo zečielə
pliesat; je bla gostilna, pa
smo se fantje pa punce
zbralə. Pa sma učasəh še
taku tjakle, smo rjakle:
»Škuoda je usake mənute
zemedət, pajmo hitru!*



On Boxing Day, there was a dance in the village inn, where the boys and the girls would get together. We, the girls, would hurry up getting there thinking: »Not a minute is to be wasted, let's make haste!«

During threshing

*Še bəl smo se pa spoznavalə, ku so majlə prosuo. Smo tut fantje pomagalə;
večina je bla pa nevada, de so fantje pa puncam nagajalə. Saj tu je punca
usaka rada vidla, ne.*

We got to know one another even better during threshing. We, the boys, also gave a hand with it, but mostly we were just teasing the girls, who loved it.

At village festivities

Po vojnā smo hodilā ne tie različne proslave, poleg ne veselice, u gostilno ne pliese.



After the war, we would often go to village festivities and dances in the village inn.



They loved going to Lašče to the Lenček's Inn. On one occasion, they first went to see a performance and then to the inn to do some singing and to have good time. My mother was waiting on tables at the time and fell in love with my father.

During performances

So hodilā u Lašče h Lajnčka u gostilno, poleg so imajlā pa eno igro. Po tā igrā so šlā u gostilno, so pajlā, pa lāpu se imajlā. Savajde, mama je pa strajgla in savajde očieta gledala – mujga ata, ne.



Marriage

The self-dependence of an individual living within the rural economy, with the constant renewal through the transfer of the property from one generation to the next one, dictated a reasonable marriage from the inheritor of the farm. His choice had to satisfy economic and family needs. Only in the second half of the 19th century the economic and society changes brought more liberal cultural background, and especially those children of farmers who had not inherited the family farm were allowed to marry for love. But it should be kept in mind that young people rarely married only for love; on the contrary: they were brought up with the idea that »birds of feather fly together«.

MARRIAGE



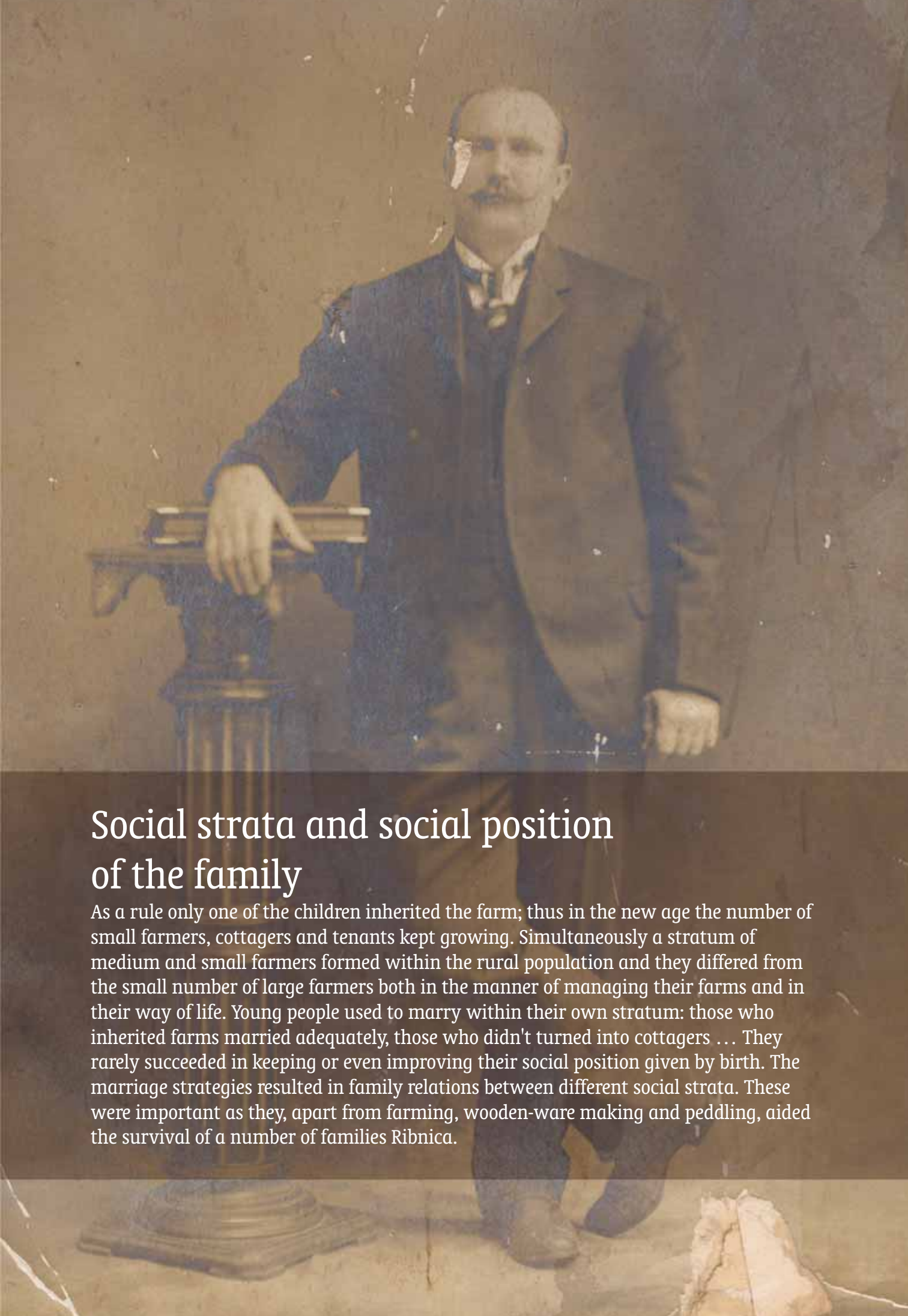
Marriage contract



An arranged marriage

»Fant, u sobuoto se malu poštimaj, malu se preoblajca, pa obrij se,« prava, »buoma šla najkam uprašat. Midva griema u Zagorico. Tam je gostilna, tam je fina punca – bo velika duota – in tam se boš ti ožjanu! Če tā je prou, če ne bo pa Juože doma!« Pol se je pa pismu dajlalu, poruočla sta se, oče mā je izruoču kmetijo.

My father said: »Boy, do yourself up on Saturday, put on some nice clothes, shave yourself and then we'll go to Zagorica. There's an inn down there and they've got a daughter who's going to have a large dowry. And that's where you'll get married. If that's ok with you; if not, Jože will stay at home.« After that, a sort of a marriage contract was put together, we got married and my father handed over the farm to me.



Social strata and social position of the family

As a rule only one of the children inherited the farm; thus in the new age the number of small farmers, cottagers and tenants kept growing. Simultaneously a stratum of medium and small farmers formed within the rural population and they differed from the small number of large farmers both in the manner of managing their farms and in their way of life. Young people used to marry within their own stratum: those who inherited farms married adequately, those who didn't turned into cottagers ... They rarely succeeded in keeping or even improving their social position given by birth. The marriage strategies resulted in family relations between different social strata. These were important as they, apart from farming, wooden-ware making and peddling, aided the survival of a number of families Ribnica.

Cottager's and woodworker's family

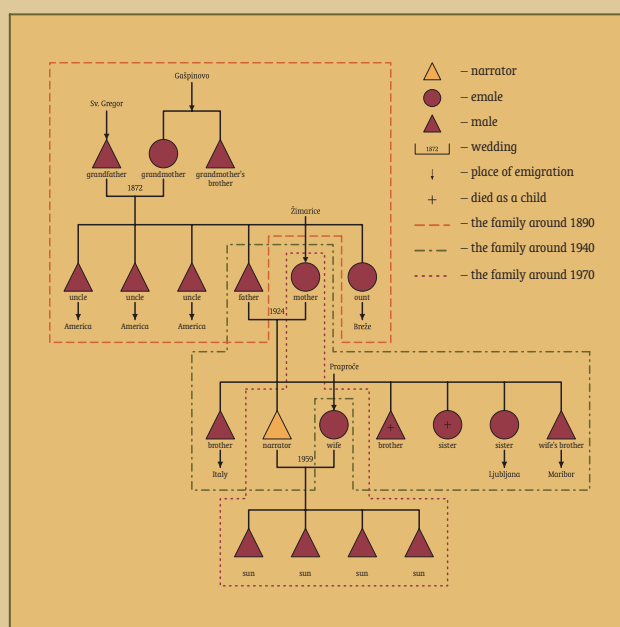


They got married, but they had no possessions. They each got something from their homes. The wife's unmarried brother also came to live with the family. While they were building a house, they were put up by the neighbours. They had five children: Janez, Jože, Lojz, my father and a daughter – Marija. Janez and Jože left for America and stayed there. My father also spent some time there, but he came back in 1923. In 1924 he got married, in 1925 he got a son and so on.

The family structure

Ne ruoke sta se vzela. Nəč najsta imajla. Najkaj ot duma je usak dubu, ne. Z ženuo je pāršu še en brat, kə naj biu nəč poročen. Ku so gradilā, so pār sosajdāh spalā. Pol sta imajla piet otruk: Janes, Juože, Luojs, muj oča, pa ena sjastra, Marija. Dva brata: Juože in Janes sta u Amerikā ostala; muj oča je u Amerikā biu in polej je pāršu triindvajsetga lajta damu. Štarindvajsetga lajta se je poruoču, petindvajsetga se je sin rodiu in pol pa taku nepraj.

Family tree of development of cottager's and woodworker's family from 1872 until 1968.



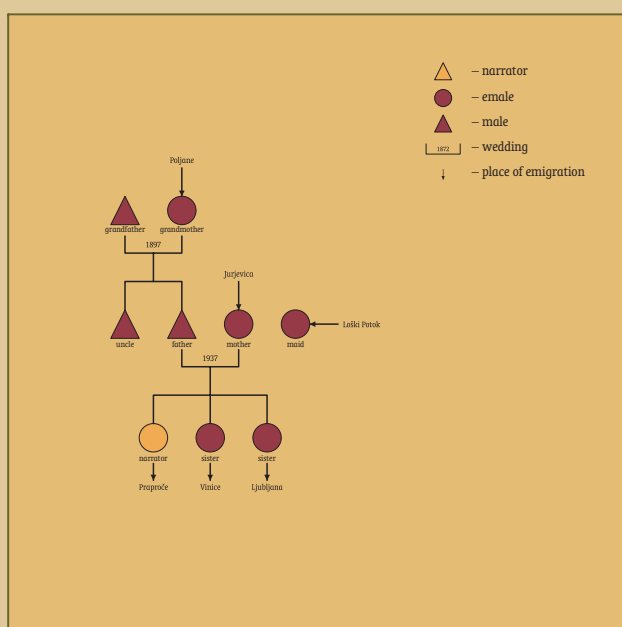
Farmer's and peddler's family

My father's brother Jože never left home and also died there. My father was a peddler. Other people living in our house were: my grandmother, my grandfather, my father and mother and two sisters. I married a man from Praproče, one of my sisters a man from Vinice and the other one a man from Ljubljana. We'd always have a maidservant in our house. One of them was from Loški Potok, while others were from Jurjevica, Retje and Mali Log.



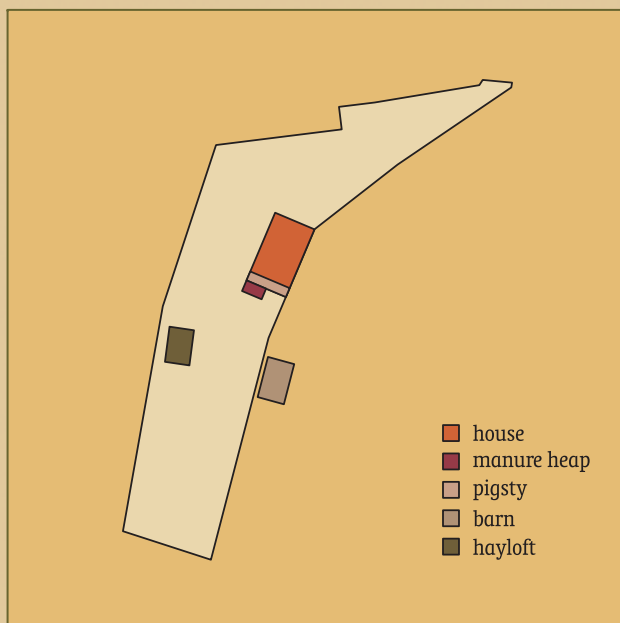
The family structure

*Atou brat Juože naj šu nəkamər, je biu dama – je uməru dama – je tut zdumou.
Polej smo pa pər hišə blə še: stara matə, star oča, oča, mama, pa dvaj sestrie.
Jəs səm se poročila ne Praproče, ena je šla ne Vince, ena je šla pa u əlbjano. Smo pa imajlə zmieraj dajklo – z Loškəga Potuoka, pol je bla ena z Jurjeuce, pa z Rajtij, pa z Malga luoga.*



Family tree of development of farmer's and peddler's extended family in the 1950s.

Cottager's and woodworker's family



Ground plan of cottager's and woodworker's family outbuilding around 1950.

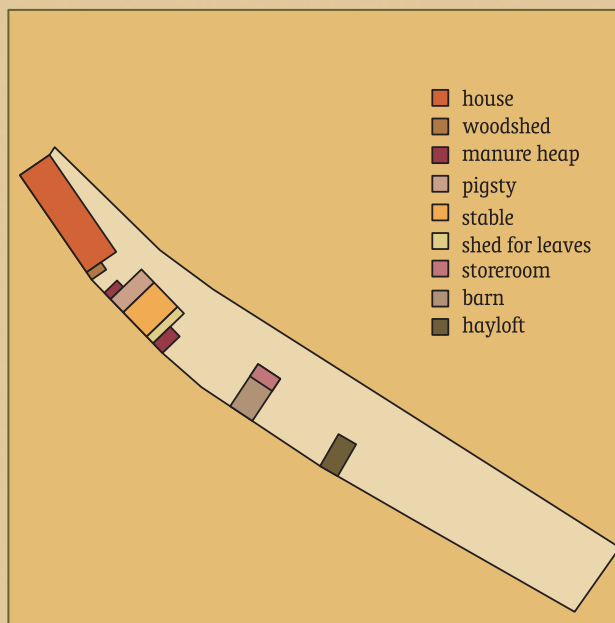
The economy

Ja, zemluo je kupu; pa usak ruot je mau pærkupu zemlie, ne. Tut stric, mamæn brat, ka je z nuo pæršu, je najlajpšæ kuos kupu. Otruk naj imu, poročen naj biu, pa obudce je dajlou. Imajlæ smo en hektar niu, košenice, pa najkaj guozda. Pærdajlalæ smo petnajst, šestnajst miernæku ušnice; ječmiena enæh desiet miernæku; prosa pa ene tri. Predalu se je sosajdæ mlajku, pa jurčke – ona pa nepraj u æbljano. Obude smo dajlalæ, je bla slaba plača, pa otrocæ so blæ. Zemlie naj blu tulku pær nas – je blu ze hrano. Pol smo zečielæ mlajku odajat, prašiča smo enga ne lajtu prodalæ pa tut kašno telico, de se je prežævajlu.

My father bought some land and every generation after that bought some more of it. My uncle, my mother's brother, who came to live with the family, bought the nicest piece of land. He had no children, wasn't married and made a living making rims. We had a hectare of land, some meadows and a bit of woods. We would grow fifteen or sixteen bushels of wheat, about ten bushels of barley and three bushels of millet. We would sell milk and porcini to a neighbour of ours, and she would then sell them on in Ljubljana. The pay wasn't particularly good and there were children to support, so we were making rims. We didn't have enough land to be able to make a living of it, but we grew food for ourselves on it. Later we started selling milk and sold one pig and a heifer or two every year to make ends meet.

Farmer's and peddler's family

Ground plan of farmer's and peddler's family outbuilding around 1950.

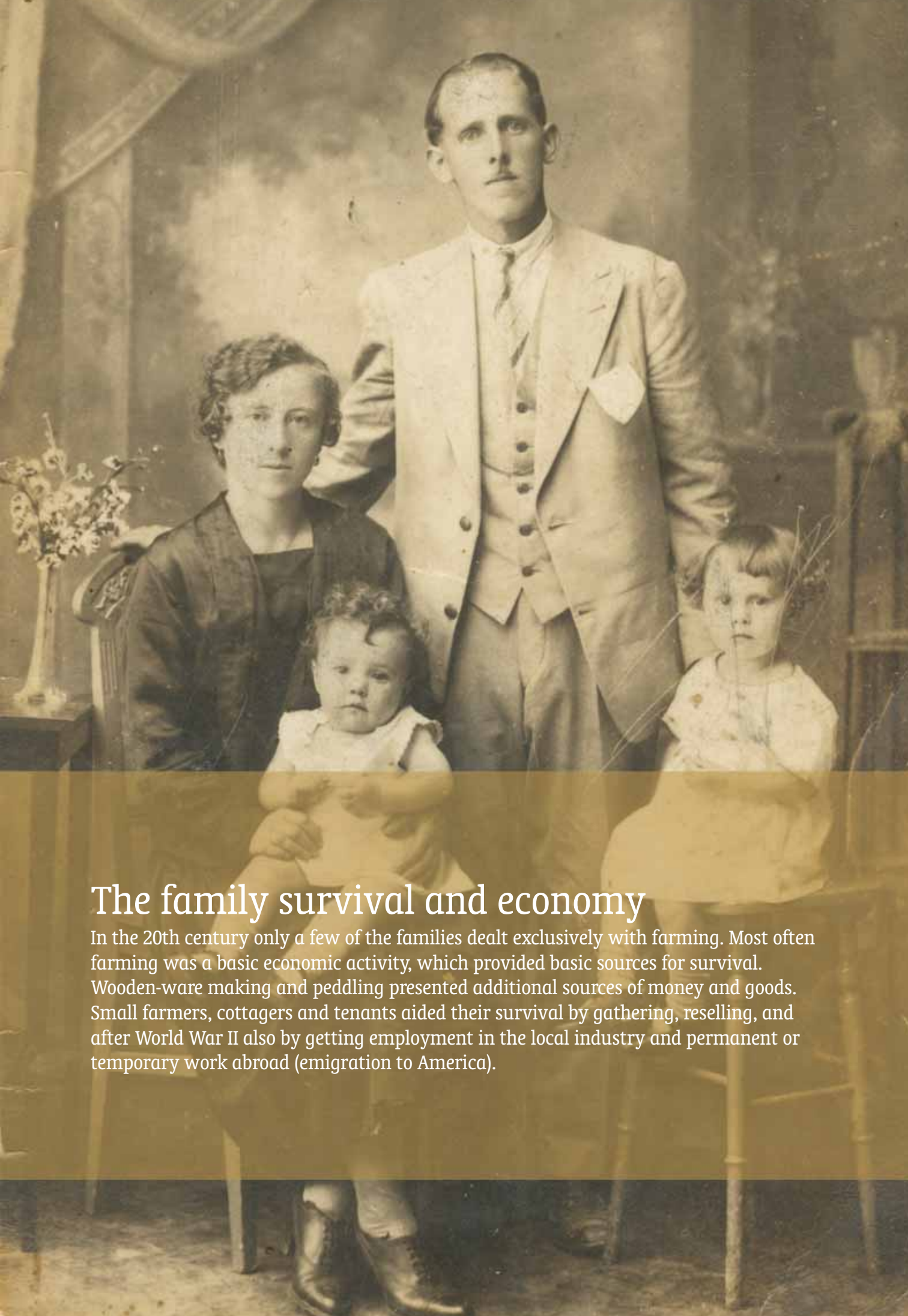


The economy

Use skāp je blu dvanajst hektarju z guozdam uret; srajdna kmetija ze nas, takrat. Smo imajlā: krave, kašānga bika; pārdajlālā smo ječmiena po desiet miernāku, ušnice dvanajst, koruze petdeset miernāku, kēmpirja pa različnu ... pa pajse zmieraj po deviet aru; smo imajlā štirā prašiče. Smo imajlā krasān sadounak; devetinpesetga lajta smo prodalā šiest taužānt jabuk pārve klase, druge klase pa štirā tuone u internat, kā je biu takat u Ribāncā. Ata je hodu pa še rešieta prodajat u Austrijo. Čē njabā blu tāga, bā blu bāl skromnu, samu ot kmetije, kā je premajhna – tu je biu glavnā vir dnarja. Pridnā so moglā bāt.

Including the forest we had twelve hectares of land altogether. At the time this was considered a mid-sized farm. We had cows and a bull or two; we would produce ten bushels of barley, twelve bushels of wheat, fifty bushels of maize and different amounts of potatoes. We had nine ares of beet, as we had four pigs to feed. We also had a wonderful orchard. In 1959, we sold six tons of first-class apples and four tons of second-class apples. We sold most of them to a boarding school which was in Ribnica at the time. My father would also travel to Austria to sell sieves. This was our main source of income. Our farm was too small to make a living out of it. We had to work hard.





The family survival and economy

In the 20th century only a few of the families dealt exclusively with farming. Most often farming was a basic economic activity, which provided basic sources for survival. Wooden-ware making and peddling presented additional sources of money and goods. Small farmers, cottagers and tenants aided their survival by gathering, reselling, and after World War II also by getting employment in the local industry and permanent or temporary work abroad (emigration to America).

Sale of wood – forestry

*Dārģačā je oča hodu
tokulelej pozimā huoje
sajkat ze luon. Dokler
najsma imajlā kojna, je
sam sajkou, polej, kā sā je
pa kojna kupu, ne, je pa
tut furou.*



In winter, my father would usually earn some money by cutting down fir trees. Before he bought a horse, he had only been doing the cutting down part and afterwards he was also the one to transport the trees.

Sale of produce



When I was going to school, it was after the war, some apartment buildings were built for army officers to live in. Me and my brother would take milk to these buildings. Each of us carried four milk cans – two in each hand. We would also sell some potatoes, apples and beans, which earned our parents the money to buy school shoes and clothes, and some other things. If it was a rich harvest, we earned good money, if not, the year was not so good.

*Kā sām jās u šulo hodila –
tu je blu žie po vojnā – so
pa tle neriedlā ofcierske
bloke in so se neselilā ti
ofcierjā in sma mlajku
nosila z bratam. Vsak po
štier kangle: dvaj kangle u
eno rokuo, dvaj kangle u
drugo, pa sma šla.*

*Kāmpirja so mau prodalā,
jabuka, fāržuola. In so nas
ze šulo obulā pa oblajklā,
pa žāvajlā smo. Čē je blu
dobru lajtu, se je dalu
dostā dobāt, čē ne je blu
skromnu.*



Our godfather, who would come over every now and then, had a horse. I had a ride with the horse and the chaise. Can you imagine what a big deal a horse was in those days?

The importance of horses in rural economy

Biermanskə buotər je səm gor hodu, pa kojne je imu. Pa sə šuparjam səm se pjalou, s kojnam, pa vajš, kaj je tu takat blu, kojn, ne?!

Kojn se je u smrajko zedu z uzdamə in se je noga do kraja zlomila. Ubət smo ga moglə in glih otava je bla.

In ku so ga peljalə məmu duma, je toku rezgetou, kə je vajdu, de je tle dama. Mi smo pa vsə jokala.



In the forest, the horse's reins got entangled around a spruce and the horse broke its leg, so we had to kill it. It was at the time when we were drying hay. When they were taking the horse past the house, it was neighing very loudly, as if it knew this was its home. We all cried.



We used to look for porcini and one year also for acorns. In autumn, when fields were being ploughed, we would also gather comfrey. We then gave it a wash, lit the furnace and dried it on a rack. We sold it to the cooperative, where medicinal herbs were purchased from people.

Gathering economy

Smo jurčke nebrala, enu lajtu smo želot nebirala. Pa ka se je jesenā oralu, se je pa tut gabes pobiralu in smo ga oprala, pa pieč zekurila in ne lajsa posušla. Pa smo gabes prodajala u zadrugo – tle je biu prou otkup tēh zdravilnāh zelišč.

Employment at home and abroad

Sām šla u Nemčijo, de sām najkaj zeslāžila; najsām šla, de bā sādajla po gostilnāh – najsām šla nākulā – najsām imajla drobiža, tut kruha najsām kēpila.

Sām šla pa jās u službo konc maja, petinšesetga lajta, u Riko.



I went to Germany to earn some money and not to waste my time in inns. I never did go to any inns. I didn't even have money to buy bread...

I got a job in Rika in late May 1965.

Wooden ware

*Jesiena, od male maše pa
do oktobra, smo muogla
nesajkat palce ze grable.*

*Med tām cajtām smo še
zmieraj kmetovalā: ušnico
smo vsjala; pa tretje smo
kosilā; gnuj se je mogu
razpjalat; koruza se je
žiela; rajpa se je ribala ...
tu je moglu bāt use
nerjanu. Dnievā so se
držalā ku rak, ampək usak
dan je blu dajlu
resporejanu.*



In autumn, from Assumption of Mary until October, we had to chop up sticks to make wooden rakes. During that time there was a lot of farm work to do. We had to sow wheat, do the third hay cutting, spread manure, harvest the maize, grate the turnip, etc. All of this had to be done. There was a lot of work to do every single day.



Adolf, who purchased wooden rims from rim-makers, would always come on Sundays. He arrived by carts and horses, so he could take it all with him. When he came, he had a look at the ware and asked: »Who made this?«. My father pointed at me. He was looking at me and said: »Well, you'll have to work on it a bit and then it's going to be just fine«. And he gave me five dinars as a present.

*Je pāršu Adolf – ta, kə je
otkəpavou – je ob nedajlah
hodu okulā. Je pāršu pa z
vozmi, s kojnā, de je obude
otpjalou. Pa je pāršu, pa je
gledou. »Kdu pa tu dajla,«
je rieku. »Pa talej,« me je
oče pokazou. Pa me je
gliedou. »No,« je rieku, »še
malu se muorāš popravāt,
pa bo u riedā«. Pa māj
pet dinarju šienkou.*

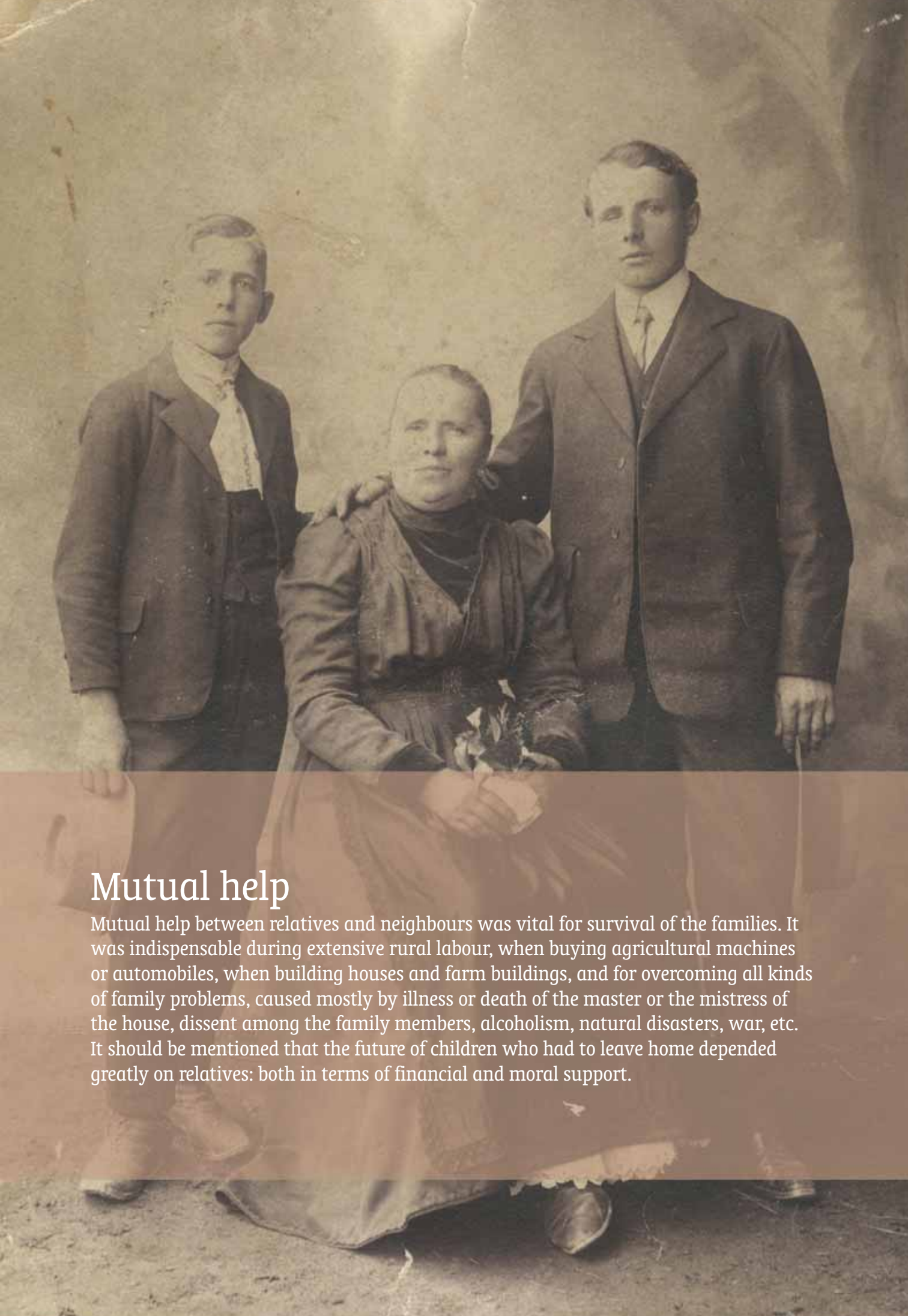
Peddling

*Če će Ribānčan dobru
predat, muore imat: prvāč
jazak, svinjskə želuodac, de
muore use pojejt kar dobi,
pa pasje nogie, de muore it
ku pəs.*



For a person from Ribnica to be successful he has to have: a tongue to start with, a pig-like stomach so he can eat everything he gets and dog-like legs so he can run as fast as a dog.





Mutual help

Mutual help between relatives and neighbours was vital for survival of the families. It was indispensable during extensive rural labour, when buying agricultural machines or automobiles, when building houses and farm buildings, and for overcoming all kinds of family problems, caused mostly by illness or death of the master or the mistress of the house, dissent among the family members, alcoholism, natural disasters, war, etc. It should be mentioned that the future of children who had to leave home depended greatly on relatives: both in terms of financial and moral support.



My father, his brother, brother-in-law and father-in-law got along so well that they would buy the ware together, put all the money together as well and divide it into equal parts, regardless of how much each of them sold. They were friends and relatives at the same time.

Mutual help among peddlers

Oče je biu z bratam skap, pa še švogar, pa tast. So blā trije, pārjatlā, pa žlahta obenām. Oni so blā toku složnā, de so ruobo skap kārvalā in dnar skap dala in rezdajlā ne enake dele ne glede, kulku je kier prometa ustvaru.

Help with building a new house

Mjanā so mujā bratje zelu dostā pomagālā, smo blā adān do družga. Samu z dajlam, nāč z dnarjem.



My brothers helped me a lot – work-wise, not money-wise. We gave one another a hand a lot.

Help with educating and raising children

*Muoževa nečakinja –
štərinštərsetga lajta je
rojana – je bla čist skuzə
tukaj, pər nas; še pol, kə je
u əlubljanə štədirala.*



My husband's niece, who was born in 1944, lived with us all the time, even while she was studying in Ljubljana.



It was in 1948 – our house had been renovated partly, only the planking had been laid. It was then that Kragel, a priest from Ljubljana, came to ask if we'd be willing to put him up in our house. My mother said: »Jesus, what if we really put him up and give him a room, and Zinka could have a flat in Ljubljana.«

Help during studies

*Je blu lajtu uosəminštərde-
set. Pər nas je blu delnu
obnouljanu – so ble samu
dile položjane. Pride
duhovnək Kragəl z
əbjlane in uprašə, če bə ga
uzielə pot strajho. »Jəzəs,«
je rjakla mama, »kaj pa, če
bə ga rajs uziela? Pa bə ga
dalə u eno sobo, Zinka bə
imajla pa stanovajne tam
u əbjlanə.«*

Help with some major farm work

*Smo hodilā snope
rezvezavat, pa u mašino
podajat. Pa tistā gepl so
krave vārtile – je blu trajba
krave gonāt. Pa smo hodilā
pomagat sosajdam,
ankrat adən, ankrat adən.*



We would often give a hand to our neighbours. We helped them undo sheaves and handed them over to the thresher. We were also driving cows while they were pushing the threshing machine. We all helped one another whenever help was needed.





*A, tu smo sà pa met seboj
pomagalà, pàr košnà, pa
tut op žietvà, pa op plajtva,
pa op mlatvà – takat smo
sà pa met seboj sosajdje
pomagalà. Smo se
zmajnilà: dənàs mi, jutər
buoste vi in toku nepraj.*

Neighbours gave one another a hand with cutting the grass, harvesting, weeding and threshing. We had a deal we'd do the work on a particular day, somebody else the next day and so on.





In Germany I did my best to put aside some money. My sister's husband said I should give them some money to buy a car known as »fičo«. So I did put some German marks in their account – 8,000 marks to be exact. I bought the car for my sister, who had a heart condition.

Help with buying a car

Səm šparala u Nemčijā. Pa je rieku od sestrie muož: »Daj zā fičkota!« Jās sām marke nekazala – tu je blu uosem taužant mark. Ze sestruo sām ga kapa, kə je bla srčnā bounik.

A sepia-toned photograph of a woman standing in front of a rustic building. The building features a stone wall on the left and a wooden structure on the right. The woman is wearing a dark jacket and a light-colored skirt, and she is holding a long stick or pole. The roof of the building is made of wooden planks. The overall tone is historical and nostalgic.

Survival strategies

Making acquaintances, weddings, farm work, manufacture and sale of wooden ware and employment at home and abroad enabled material, social and spiritual survival of individuals and the society. The man from Ribnica has been shaped by love of land and nature, which is reflected also in the customs and traditions. Productiveness and their hard-working nature lead people from warm farmhouse stoves to work in America, peddling in Germany and employment in domestic companies. Accounts and photos of the five fundamental survival strategies describe the culture and way of life of the farming, wooden-ware making, peddling and working man from Ribnica.

Smo se začelā pogovarjat o poruokā, punce sploh poznou najsm.

The wedding was arranged and I didn't even know the girl.



The photo shows Marica from Kot. Her father was a constable and therefore the family had to move frequently. She spent her early childhood in Kot. Her grandmother, who was known by the name of »the old Grajna«, was a wooden-ware peddler. The photo was taken around 1950.



A group of girls in the square in Ribnica, among them Karolina Kovačič, who, in her youth, enjoyed beauties of nature as well as spending time in the company of people eager for knowledge.



Not much was needed, only a bit of good will, for people to start playing instruments, singing and dancing. From time to time Nada and Ivan Mohar danced in their home courtyard in Loški Potok. The photo was taken around 1959.



Girls from Praproče on a Sunday trip. Photo: the priest Novak. The photo was taken in the 1950s.



Members of the Sušje Cultural Society going off by bicycle to see the play Veriga (Chain) in Velike Lašče. Some time prior to that, they had performed the play themselves. The photo was taken around 1950.



A trip by horse and a cart to Nova Štifta, which took place while relatives from the USA, the Šilc family, were visiting. The photo was taken in 1962.



A photo session of actors of the Sušje Cultural Society who performed in the play Matija Matajev. The director of the play was Jože Grebenc, a teacher and headmaster of the school in Sušje. The photo was taken around 1950.



A parade during a fire brigade festivity in Žlebič in 1960. The flag bearer is Nande Šilc. On the left there is Ludvik Peterlin.



A firebrigade flag being unfurled in Žlebič. The first person on the horse is Nande Šilc and behind him is Ludvik Peterlin from Žlebič, locally known by the name of Kramarčén. The photo was taken in 1960.



A celebration of the 60th birthday of Janez Rigler, locally known as Matevžev from Praproče. Celebrations of anniversaries, weddings, confirmations and other major festivities usually took place in their house. The photo was taken in 1952.



A wedding at the Induk family in Hrib which took place in their house. The musician was Štefanov France from Dolenja vas.



The wedding of Marica Mihelič, locally known as Jernejeva from Kot, and Alojz Košir, known as Krivken from Jurjevica. Marica is a peddler's daughter and her husband Alojz peddled himself when he was young. The photo was taken in front of the Mihelič home, locally known as the Konikar house in Kot. Until World War II, the Konikar family owned a grocery shop and a wooden ware shop, and they also wove wire meshes for riddles. Peddlers came to buy goods at their shop and the Konikar family also sent goods to peddling districts themselves.



A wedding photo of Marija Kos, who got married in a black dress. In the 1920s and 1930s, it was customary for girls in Ribnica to get married in black.



A wedding photo of Tone and Ančka Petek taken at Cene's during 'šranga', a Slovene folk wedding custom. Standing to the right of Tone is his best man Janežev Andrej. The photo was taken in 1959.



A postcard from the maternity hospital sent by a new mom in 1959 to her husband and the rest of her family in 1959.



Praj se je use obdajlalu, samu snožietā smo kosīlā.

The entire land used to be cultivated and grass was cut only in meadows.



Grass cutting with a scythe and an Agria mower. The photo shows the transition from manual farm work to farm mechanization. Introducing Introduction of farm mechanization was made possible also by means of the money earned by from working in Germany. The photo shows the period during which a living was earned by means of farming, working abroad and mutual aid. It The photo was taken around 1960.



A part of the outbuilding of the rake-maker Franc Lovšin in Otavice. The photo shows Franc with his son, carrying a basket with litter for the pigs. Also shown in the photo there are the house, thea manure heap, thea courtyard, thea stable, thea pigsty and thea chicken ladder leading to thea henhouse. The photo was taken in 1966.



A scrap of hay in front of the stable. Also shown in the photo there is the hay blower, used to get hay into the stable or onto the hayloft. The photo was taken in 1966.



Rakers from Sušje. The first one on the left is Ivana; her maiden name was Ambrožič. Rakers had an important role in major farm works and this is reflected also by their clothes. Photo: Divjak.



Ploughing a field with a cow and a plough. Before mechanical equipment was introduced in the early 1960s, the land had mostly been cultivated manually.



Anton Petek's sister Micika and his mother are reaping barley at Novo Brezje. The photo was taken by Anton's brother Jože Petek around 1938.



Hay-turning with a tractor and a tedder, done by Ludvik Ambrožič from Dane. He was a peddler and peddled also in Germany. Farm mechanization in the Ribnica Valley often improved as a result of money earned in Germany. Accordingly, it was mostly German brands of farm machinery that was used. The photo was taken around 1975.



Manual pear pressing done by the Martin family in Hrovača. As not everyone could afford to buy a press, there used to be shared presses for fruit pressing in villages. The photo was taken prior to World War II by Jože Petek.



Herd books being introduced at farms, which was done by livestock societies.

Zvajstu ku lastovka pride Nace usako pomlat.

Dependably like a swallow Nace arrives every spring



The peddler Ignacij Pinter from Ravni dol sold wooden ware with a »cannon«. There was an article about him in the newspaper Slovenski dom in 1926, describing his hard-working and facetious character, his drive and persistence.

Every successful peddler has to possess all these qualities.

Rešetar Nace. Od Sv. Lenarta v Slov. gor. smo prejeli: Kdo ga ne pozna, našega Nacea iz Ribnice. Ko v kratkem slavi 65letnico, kar hodi v naše kraje, naj bodi posvečeno vrčnemu rokodelcu nekaj vrstic. Ignac Pinter je rojen leta 1848. On in njegov še dve leti starejši brat Urh sta prišla svoječasno z očetom Ignacem v Slovenske gorice. Naš Nace je bil tedaj 14 let star. Ko se je izučil v recčarski obrti in mu je umrl oče, je hodil sam vsako leto s svojo »súho robo« v Sv. Lenart, kjer je imel svoje bivališče v nekdanji Sarničevi, sedaj Zamolovi hiši. Odtod je nosil svojo robo na prodaj širom Slovenskih goric. Njegov brat Urh pa si je izbral bližnji trg Sv. Trojica. Zvesto kakor lastovka pride Nace vsako pomlad in postavi svoj šotor pred Sarnic-Zamolovo hišo v senci košatega kostanja. Tam je njegov najljubši prostor, tam sedi od jutra do večera, bodisi lepo ali slabo vreme. Tam dela recčata, tam jih prodaja, tam se razgovarja z ljudmi in se smeji, da se prenese ta srčni smeh na okoli stojete osebe in se sliši daleč po trgu in udari celo na uho strogega okrajnega sodnika, ki je zamišljen v svoje spise. In nehote se nasmehlja tudi on in si misli, če bi imeli vsi tako pošteno srce in ta odkritosrčni smeh, bi sodnija ne imela dosti opravka in bi bili zapori prazni. Naš Nace je dosti videl in dosti doživel. Prišel je v Sv. Lenart pred 64 leti, davno že ni več tistih gospodarjev, ki so bili tedaj, in od tistih, ki so se narodili tedaj, jih je že mnogo leglo v grob, drugi pa imajo že sive lase. Nace je del zgodovine Sv. Lenarta, dosti ve povedati o davnih časih. Vedno je vesel, vedno ve kako živivo povedati, pri čemur spušta sive oblačke iz svoje pipe, češ, dokler mi ta diši, sem še zdrav. Spomni se še tudi svoje 14 let mlajše žene Mojce, ki baje kašlja in pravi, da jo bo Nace prej pokopal. Pošten je naš Nace, čista duša, mož stare korenine, najmanjša stvar ga razveseli in tedaj vsiklikne, kako je lušno. Da, Nace, bodi vesel, ostani zdrav, tvoja poštenost in marljivost bodi naj vzor vsem, k nam pa le še pridi vsako leto! Nace, ti si naš, vsak te spoštuje in hrani na tebe najlepši spomin!



A postcard by Anton Petek, a peddler from Kot; he sent it to his wife in 1935 from Grimmenstein in Austria, where he was peddling at the time.



The sieve-maker Nace from Dolenja was travelled around on his bicycle to sell his ware in Borovlje. The photo was taken around 1950 and is in private possession.



The peddler Alojz Lušin in Črenšovci, where he lived with the Žnidaršič family, who were locally known by the name of Svagula. Alojz was called Lojz. The photo was taken in 1946.

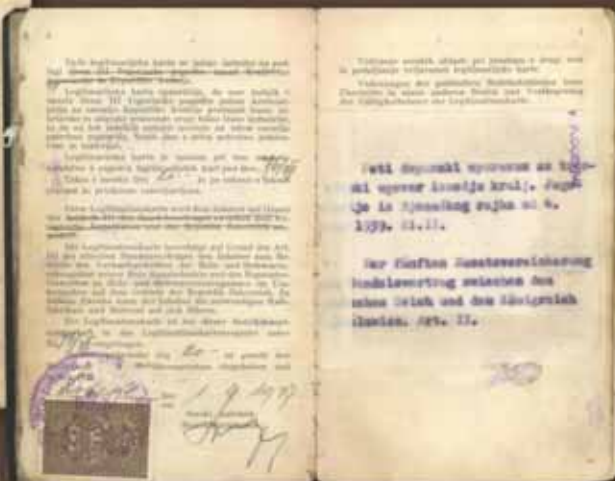


Wooden ware for sale at a marketplace in Maribor, sold by Pavla Arko. Pavla's brother Stane owned a little wooden ware store in Maribor. He often also sold his wooden ware at a Maribor marketplace stall and his sister Pavla helped him with this.

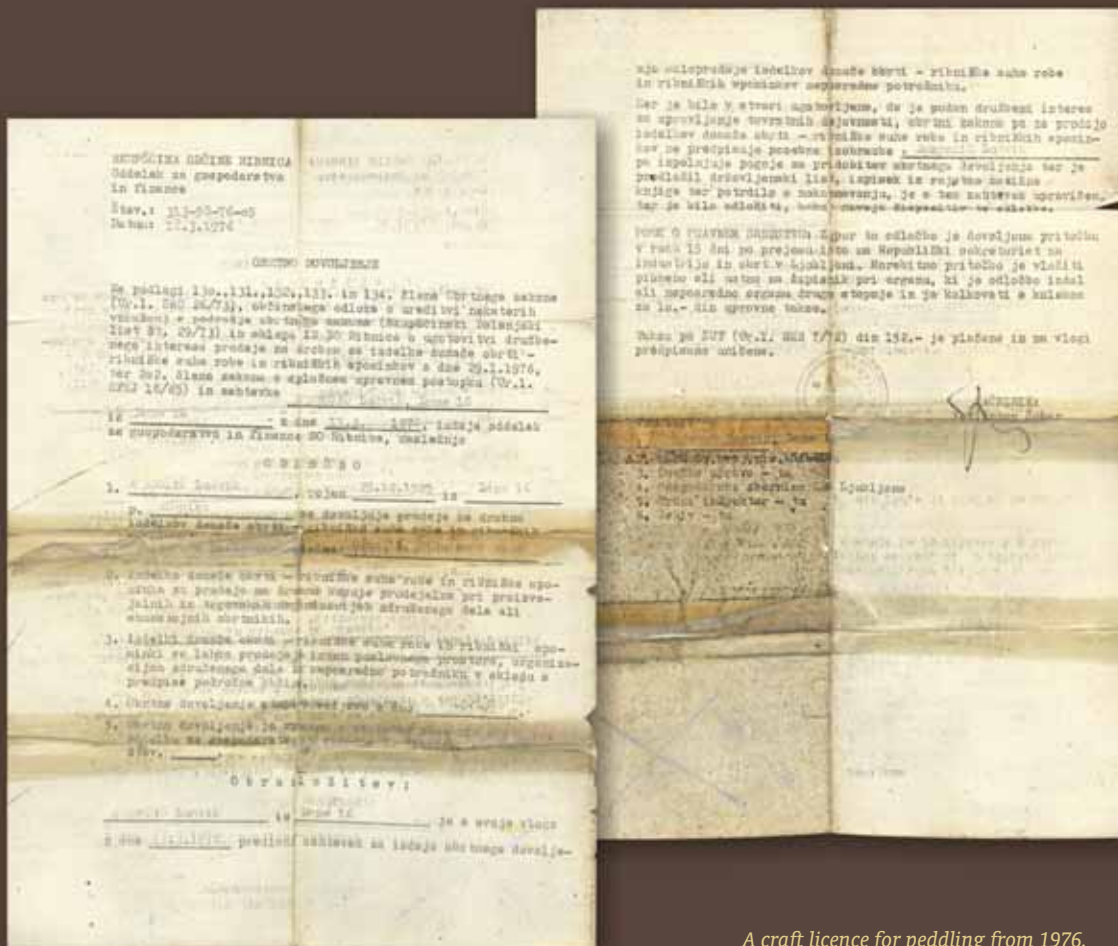
Pavla Arko is the lady in the background.



Before World War II, the peddler France Mihelič worked with a cart and a horse in the Srem, Bačka and Banat regions, and after the war in the Italian territory of the then Zone A, which stretched until Unec. He would go to Gorenjska with his son France to exchange sieves and riddles for grains and maize (this was called »majna«). The photo was taken in front of an inn in Unec around 1965.



Peddling license for peddling in Austria.
Alojz Marn from Jurjevica, born in 1885, peddled in
Vienna in Austria until World War II.



A craft licence for peddling from 1976.

Kdur se u staržinah rodi u staržinah umre.

If you are born in wood chips, you die in wood chips.



A portrait of Anton Govže, a woodturner. The photo was taken around 1979. Photo: Drago Mohar.



After World War II, woodmakers had a cooperative in Sodražica, which was called Suha roba (Wooden ware). Through the cooperative, manufacturers could buy wood for wooden-ware making as well as sell their finished products.



Side-rim makers who worked in the Koroška region, in Spittal, where they fled to after the war. They worked there for three years. From Koroška they moved on to Canada. From left to right: Mežnar from Sv. Križ na Jurjevici, Jože Šilc - Franckov from Poljane, Cvar Ivan, Pintarjev from Slatnik.

Pār nas je bla nevada, de je samu adən ostou dama, drugā so šlā po svajtā.

It was customary in our family that only one stayed and the rest left home.



Women also began gaining independence and earning a living for the whole family. One of such women was also Iva Gornik, who got a job in the company Riko. The photo was taken in 1969. Photo: Drago Mohar.



The central warehouse at Inles. France Jaklič, a forklift driver. The photo was taken in the early 1980s. Photo: Franc Mihelič Kot.



Jože Arko from Jurjevica – on the train saying goodbye to his brother France Arko. Jože worked in Germany, making a living as a peddler. The photo was taken in the 1960s.



Andoljšek Marija with her relatives at the celebration of her 60th birthday. The Fiat car ('fičko') shown in the photo was owned by her son Pavel, who worked in Germany. The photo was taken in 1965.



Slavko Šega on his brother's motorbike brought to him from Germany by his father. The photo was taken in front of the storeroom in Ravni dol around 1965.



A Volkswagen car brought from Germany by Jože Arko. The photo was taken in the courtyard of their home in Jurjevica and shows his wife Pavla and children. The photo was taken in the 1960s.



A postcard from Karlsruhe, where France Lovšin worked as a peddler. He wrote the postcard to his wife in 1962.



Workers in Germany. The photo was taken in front of a pharmacy. From left to right: Starc from Hrovača, Rus from Nemška vas, Andoljšek from Hrovača, Tanko from Hrovača, Janez Petek from Hrovača and Merhar from Prigorica. The photo was taken around 1969.



There were many economic emigrants from the Ribnica Valley before World War II. One of them was also Stanko Mihelič from Ribnica. He left for America in 1930. From the beginning he held different jobs, one of the notable ones in terms of earnings being in a mine in Canada.

After the war he returned home, took over his father's property, got married and made a success of his family village inn. The photo was taken in the 1930s.



To make business during the mass emigration to America, shipping and railway intermediary companies invested a great deal in propaganda and as a result made a great business.



MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A
HAPPY NEW YEAR

*Vrste Bratstvo prijateljev in
blaginjskega društva 1918
Družina
Janina Lina*

Emigrants kept in touch with their families through letters. Holiday cards arrived unfailingly each year for Christmas and New Year's. The Jaklič family from Sajevec also wrote letters.

The image shows a museum exhibit. Two long, thin wooden poles are leaning against a solid red wall. They are tied together at the top with a piece of dark material. A long shadow is cast by the poles onto the wall. In the foreground, there is a large, shallow, woven basket made of light-colored reeds. A scythe with a curved blade and a wooden handle is placed inside the basket. The floor is covered with dry straw or hay. On the right side of the image, there is a small, light-colored rectangular panel with text in a non-Latin script.

cepec
arp
jerbas

Exhibition

The content is presented in a way that reflects the form of a house. Just like four cornerstones are necessary for a house, fundamental content strands are necessary also for existence of families. These strands include reproduction, social strata and position, economy and survival and mutual help. The background of the house is filled with photos and documents of the five survival strategies. The valuable story of life is in its own way told also by artefacts.

EXHIBITION



EXHIBITION



EXHIBITION





Workshops and board games

Together with the exhibition, we created workshops on learning about different types of grains and beans as well as board games Memory, Špana and Ludo. And in cooperation with the Library and Miklova hiša Museum we designed a workshops on dialects. The starting point of the workshop is an ethnological field research. Narrations by people who provided information are in the local dialect and quotations taken from their narrations form a foundation of the workshop. One of the natives of the Ribnica Valley is the linguist and priest Stanislav Škrabec, who established the Slovene standard phonetics. This gives us a basis that enables us to offer museum visitors such contents through workshops. Awareness of oneself and of one's identity is closely connected also with one's language, which differs greatly from one place to another. Workshops and board games enable visitors to get to know the life of the Ribnica people, which is in terms of certain features as well as general lifestyle linked to the broader essence of the nation.



The workshop has been set up for the senior nursery school children and for each of the three-year periods of the Slovene nine-year primary school.



For the nursery school children and pupils of the first two three-year periods the workshops are also suitable as the so-called »technical days«.

The contents of technical days are aimed at learning about agricultural produce, in particular grains and beans. Children glue grains onto bushels or wicker baskets and thus get to know the exhibited items.

What is this thing on the table?





How creative are we!

What is this corn for?

Oats are good fodder for horses, wheat is used to bake bread and maize to make maize porridge; and one could often do with a cup of barley coffee.



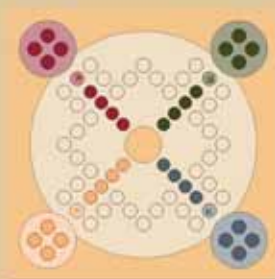
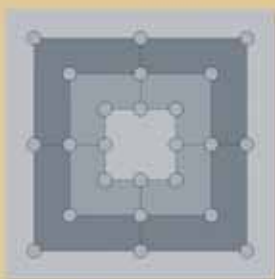
Farmers were able to make ends meet if they produced around 15 bushels of wheat.



My roots define who I am.



The workshop also includes some relaxing games, such as Memory with museum items, the so-called Špana board game and Ludo. Špana is played by two people who use two kinds of beans (the 'ribničan' and 'koksar' beans), whereas Ludo uses two additional kinds of beans (black-eyed peas and beans usually used to make bean stew). The games are very simple and entertaining, yet educational at the same time.





Through the
dialect to laughter,

thoughts about
my and your



Board games highlight a number of elements that place an individual in a locality. The sense of belonging to a place is vital and extremely important for everyone. Families and individuals need foundations just like houses.



identities.

Memory Game

The game is based on the exhibited items and consists of 26 pairs of objects. It enables players to get connected, to relax, memorize things and socialize in a dynamic way. The objects provide information about the possibilities and means of making a living in the 20th century. The player learns about them in an entertaining, yet unobtrusive way.

Memory Game





Memory Game



Bushel

A bushel is a measure of capacity for measuring wheat (25 kg). The farms »competed« also by the number of harvested bushels of wheat. It was a symbol of wealth.



Peddler with »cannon«

Peddlers carried their goods in a pack on their back. Peddlers from Ribnica arranged their goods into packs called »cannons« and carried them from one place to another. They sold their goods in Austria, Italy, Germany, Poland, even in Romania, until after World War II their market shrunk mainly to the republics of the ex-Yugoslavia.



Peddlers with packs

The most common method of peddling for peddlers from Ribnica was travelling around with goods arranged in a pack, symbolizing a tree. »Dry goods« are made of different kinds of wood; arranged in a pack they complement the coexistence of nature and culture.



Postcards from foreign countries

Before e-mail and mobile phones were introduced, people used to correspond differently! They used to send postcards with short messages and best greetings by regular mail. This postcard was sent from Grimmstein, Austria. Before World War II peddlers frequently sold their goods in Austrian regions.



Manufacturing of wooden mesh – »bottom«

Hazel tree is quite common in the country of »dry goods«. Apart from giving hazelnuts, the hazel tree has since always enabled the people of Ribnica a better life. It is used for making wicker baskets, toothpicks, it gives wood for riddle rims and wickers for sieve bottoms are also made from it.



Migrant workers in Germany

In the 1960s a large number of people from Ribnica found temporary employment in Germany. They were called migrant workers. They could usually be recognized from faraway by their cars – Volkswagen beatles, with a sticker with the letter D – for Germany, Deutschland.



Digging and picking potatoes

The photo shows manual picking of potatoes, as in hoe agriculture which was a standard in our region until the 1980s, when the majority of farmers introduced agricultural mechanisation.



Christening garment – »pindekøl«

Christening stands for acceptance into Christian religion and was an extremely respected sacrament. Due to high mortality of newborns and religiousness, newborns were usually baptised on the third day after their birth. The child was swaddled into a tight loaf with swaddling bands (German »die Binde«), and a blanket (German »die Decke«) was spread over him; this set was called »pindekøl« and had to be white, as white symbolizes innocence.



Wedding dress

In the 1920s and 1930s brides used to come to the wedding in a black dress with a white collar, which was also used as their burial garment. The dress was usually sewn by a seamstress who came to the house and made also other things required for a bride's trousseau which a bride brought to her new home.



Butter pint

In the Ribnica Valley there used to be a lot of milk, from which sour milk, cottage cheese, cheese and butter were made. Butter was carried to Ljubljana and other towns and sold at the market. The butter pint brought the added value due to the aesthetic look, appreciated at all times! Use of butter pint showed the care and precision of the lady of the house, as such butter did not only taste good, but also looked nice.



Milk pail

It was a vessel used for milking. Pails were made of wood, later also enamelled.



Butter tub

A wooden vessel used for making butter. Milk within the butter tub was beaten until butter separated.



Milk churn

Milk was once sold from house to house; it was transported in milk churns.



Cattle yoke

Small farms were too poor to own a horse, they usually had only a cow. The cow was harnessed when hay had to be carried, or to plough a field. A cattle yoke symbolises small farms – cottages.



Decorative wall napkin

Farm kitchens in the 19th and 20th century had very modest wall ornaments. On one of the walls there was usually a napkin with a roguish inscription, embroidered by the mistress of the house. This one says: »Don't worry too much, as God gives the best.«



Necklace from Germany

Jewellery always symbolised the status of a woman. Not every one owned a pearl necklace! Fashionable accessories in Ribnica were mostly worn by women with boyfriends and husbands on migrant work in Germany.



Souvenir plate from America

At the beginning of the 20th century a large number of people from the Ribnica Valley moved across the »pond« to America. They sent and brought home souvenirs, among them this plate.



Glasses

As a rule newlyweds were given such presents which they needed in their new home. These two beautiful glasses show that both the givers and the takers of this gift were well off.



Souvenir plate from Austria

Giving presents not intended for everyday use showed the elevated social position of individuals. Hard working, persistent migrant workers most certainly had it. Such presents reminded their family of them, especially when they were absent. Most migrant workers left in early spring and came back home in autumn.



Gravy boat

It is a part of a set of plates, brought by a migrant worker from Austria for his daughter's trousseau. He was working in Salzburg.



Pocket watch

It has always been a symbol of wealth. Pocket watches were very fashionable also in the first half of the 20th century. In the Ribnica Valley mostly migrant workers, those who were in America and wealthy inhabitants carried pocket watches.



Peddler's valet

Most peasants never had a lot of money, and hardly needed valets. Peddlers, however, needed them, as quite a lot of money passed their hands.



Riddle

This tool was most characteristic and carried the name of Ribnica abroad; in Slovenian the name »rešetar«, used for peddlers, is derived from the word »rešeto« (riddle). »Rešetar« is also a person making sieves and riddles. Peddlers could make or repair riddles. Until mass introduction of mechanisation riddles were indispensable for cleaning and sifting grain, corn, beans etc.



Flail

Thrashing wheat and beans with flail for separating chaff from grain could be done by one, two or even four threshers. They hit the ground in rhythm, one after another. The flail beats created a characteristic melody, which was however gradually replaced by the threshing machines and combines (harvesters).

**Sickle**

Sickles used to be basic tools for reaping wheat and litter. A large number of families from Ribnica in the second half of the 20th century still made a living by farming. Each farm sowed wheat and planted beans. The reapers worked as hired labourers, earning two meals for a day's work.

**Hamper**

It symbolises peasantry, wealth of families, alimentary habits and one line of wooden-ware making – basket weaving. Hampers, carried on one's head, were used for carrying food to the mowers, reapers, wood cutters, and other workers. Carrying food in a hamper on one's head was the most common manner until the 1960s. Hampers were used for carrying food to church for Easter blessing.

A wooden spoon with a smooth, light-colored head and a slightly tapered handle, resting diagonally on a rustic wooden surface with prominent vertical grain patterns. The lighting is warm, casting soft shadows.

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