

Rank die Leibeigenschaft aufgehoben. Denn an Sonntagen wie an den gewöhnlichen Arbeitstagen haben wir arbeiten müssen<sup>4</sup>,<sup>54</sup>

Das überlieferte Quellenmaterial lässt uns die männliche Linie der Familie sehr viel besser erkennen; von den Frauen wissen wir viel weniger. Die Erforschung der Lebensläufe der Töchter wird häufig dadurch erschwert, dass sie nach der Eheschließung oft den Wohnort und die Gemeinde wechselten. Schon ihre Lebensdaten bleiben daher ungewiss.

Ein Großteil dieser Quellen entstammt der damaligen offiziellen Schriftführung. Diese gewährt vorrangig einen Blick in das Geschäftsleben der Rancks und vermittelt einige Informationen über deren gesellschaftliche Aktivitäten. Was aber ihr privates Leben betrifft, ist den Quellen jedoch nicht viel zu entnehmen.

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SUMMARY

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*The History of the Rancks, a Family of  
Ferryman, in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century*

The article deals with the story of the Ranck family in the context of the history of Riga in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Rancks represented a small but distinctive part of the city's society. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the male members of the family were fishermen and ferrymen, both occupations having belonged to the so called "Latvian" or "non-German" ones. In the regulated Riga trading society, those belonging to these crafts were involved in the appraising, packing, weighing and transporting of goods. Most of them passed their craft on to their offspring, lived in the same part of Riga (Mitau suburb) and belonged to the same parish. Thus, they formed a united economic, professional, territorial and social community where intermarriage was common.

The men of the family did not only represent the traditional crafts but some of them also occupied leading administrative positions. For this reason and due to the development of trade in Riga, in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Ranck family belonged to the prosperous representatives of these crafts, and with time, they wanted to secure their prosperity in the community by gaining more rights. However, the merchants then still did not want representatives of "non-German" crafts to join the shielded burgher community. At the same time, members of the Ranck family spent

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<sup>54</sup> Die Darlegung des Arbeiters Johann Krewin vor dem Rigaer Landvogteigericht über die Klage gegen den Kaufmann Wilhelm Johann Rank, Riga, 17.6.1881, in: LVVA, 1379/1/12998, Bl. 15-16, hier Bl. 16.

a lot of time at court settling heritage issues with each other. Sometimes these disputes over property lasted for years.

The middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century brought significant changes to Riga. First of all, changes in trade relations brought an end to the traditional structure of Riga society, including the “non-German” crafts. In contrast to other representatives of these crafts who continued fishing or transporting goods across the river Daugava, members of the Ranck family became timber traders and started their own mill. In 1939, most of them left Latvia on the basis of the agreement about the repatriation of ethnic Germans, although their origins lie in the “non-German” crafts of Riga.