

Lutheran Parish Church in Egipte

The church was built in Vilkuimiests by landlord A.Oettingen in 1823. In 1863 the church's tower was built. During World War I it was destroyed, and during World War II – absolutely ruined. Egyptian evangelic Lutheran church is situated in former Ilukste district, in the territory of present Daugavpils region Medumi civil parish, near the border of the Republic of Lithuania. Egyptian evangelic Lutheran parish was established in 28 February 1567 by the order of duke of Kurzeme. Approximately in 1584 Egyptian parish already had its own pastor. Around the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries near the church there appeared a hamlet that was called Vilkuimiests. Vilkuimiests is also the real Latvian name of the parish. Egyptian parish had several widened churches, the last of which was destroyed in 1812 during the French War.

The landlord of Kalkune and Medni (Medums) manor in 1823 started to build stone church that was consecrated in 5 July 1825. In 1863 A.Oettingen did complete renovation of the church and built a tower. Simultaneously with the establishment of Egyptian parish the landlord of Medni manor W.Fürstenberg established a pastorate that suffered much during the wars, because it was situated on the roadside of Daugavpils. During the French War and especially World War I the archive of the parish was totally destroyed.

After World War I, in 1930, Egyptian church was restored. It had seating capacity for 80 people. In the possession of the parish there were 54 hectares of pastorate land. In 1936 Egyptian parish had 50 members, were christened 3 children, one youth was confirmed. Incomes of the parish made 1988.86 lats, expenses – 1231.11 lats.

During World War II in 1944 the tower of Egyptian church was shot by canon because at that time in the tower was located fire lookout. The church was totally destroyed. After World War II chaplain Nikolajs Muiznieks from Daugavpils conducted the services both in destroyed church and in church attendant's local house, which now is demolished. But very soon due to the small number of the parish members governmental authorities prohibited to conduct services both in Egypt's church and in the parish. Wherewithal Egyptian parish was closed and the few parish members joined Birkenēļi parish, but after Birkenēļi parish being closed all the members joined Daugavpils evangelic Lutheran church. After Egyptian church closure in the building was located kolkhoz's chaff flour mill that was operated with the electricity. Around 1979 milling was stopped and the mill was dismantled. At this time the church is unused, empty and pitiful. The doors are broken out. Egyptian evangelic Lutheran graveyard that is located around the church is abandoned and overgrown. All the tombstones of the unknown bodies were brought away. Only some graves are in order. Last funeral in Egyptian graveyard was in 6 March 1980. This was the funeral of Sofija Vainags. In the Egyptian graveyard also lies the body Oskars Svensons, the teacher of Rainis.

Probably few inhabitants of Medumi hamlet know that in the territory of this district (the territory of former Kurcums civil parish) once existed big settlement with famous name – Egypt. It appeared in the end of 16th century not far from Lithuanian border, near Novoaleksandrovsk (Zarasai) highway and Smelīnas (present Lauces) Lake. Initially the name of the settlement was Vilkuimiests. Further the settlement was called Egypt.

It is difficult to define the origin of the name and with what it is connected. It is known that on the coat of arms of Egypt-Birkenēļi Lutheran church was illustrated the Pyramid of Cheops, whereas usually on such coat of arms were illustrated crosses or other religion symbols.

The building of wooden Lutheran church in the end of 16th century testifies about the big area of the settlement. The first pastor of the parish was Christian Fürecker. It is necessary to say that at that time there existed one more small settlement with exotic name – Jeruzaleme (Jerusalem). It was situated on the left bank of Daugava, in front of the fortress, on the land of Kalkune manor. Due to the building of bridge-head in 1812 the settlement was moved to the upper course of Daugava near the Lauces river estuary. On the basis of the settlement there appeared Griva settlement. But local inhabitants even now the former settlement place call Jeruzaleme.

In the beginning of 1870s on highway Dinaburg – Novoaleksandrovsk, in front of the settlement Egypt there was big horse

post office where post horses were changed. Postmen had special uniform: red caftan with green stripes, green cap, and a brass with National emblem on their chest. On shoulder was hanging a post horn, with the help of which was announced the arrival of postmen. Post transportation cost 12 copecks for a horse for every 10 versts (35000 feet). There were no postmarks yet. Post chaises transported people too. After the opening of the railway Dinaburg – Riga in 1861 mail was transported by trains, but the route Dinaburg – Novoaleksandrovsk existed for a long time. In 1914 in the middle of September these places were occupied by the army of Imperial Germany. Germans were attacked by the soldiers of the 12th Caucasus Regiment of Riflemen who went from Dvinsk. Germans were driven away from Medumi district. But there were too many victims. Four kilometers from Medumi there appeared a cemetery. On crosses there were plates with surnames of the soldiers of the 12th Caucasus Regiment of Riflemen. There were many victims in enemy's army too. In Stelmuiža, next to the old oak there is remained a part of German military cemetery crosses. From 1822 the pastor of Egypt-Birkeneļi parish was Oskars Svensons. In autumn of 1874 to Svenson Care House was sent 9 years old Jānis Rainis (at that time known as Zanis Plieksans) to obtain the basic knowledge that were necessary for Grīva German School.

Egypt was delivered in the possession of Medumi manor, the landlord of which was W.Fürstenberg. The settlement has disappeared a long time ago. Old wooden pastorate house, where lived O.Svensons with family, was demolished. In its place was built two-storey stone house.

Address: Egipte, Medumi parish, Daugavpils region, Daugavpils nov., LV-5460

E-mail: taka@dnd.lv

Home page: <http://www.visitdaugavpils.lv>

Coordinates: 55°44'48.5" N, 26°18'41.1" E

Cultural-historical objects

Description: Egyptian Lutheran parochial Church in Valkumiesta was started by landlord A. Etingens in 1823. In 1863. was built church's tower. During the First World War the church was ruined, during the Second World War it was totally smashed up. Egyptian Evangelical - Lutheran Church is placed in previous Ilūkstes district. Now it is Daugavpils region, the territory of small district Medumi, near the Republic of Lithuania border. Egyptian Evangelical - Lutheran parish was built by command of Courland duke in 1567. February 28. He wanted to see the new church building. In 1584. Egyptian parish had its own parson. On turn of the 16. and 17. century near the Egyptian Church appeared small village, which was called as Vilkumiests. It is also the real Latvian name of the parish. Egyptian parish had a lot of different wooden churchs, the last of them was ruined during the French War in 1812. Landlord of Kalkūnes and Medņi (Medumi) started to build a stone church in 1823. It was confirmed in 1825. July 5. A Etingens (Oettingen) made the full renovation of church and build a tower in 1863. With the building of Egyptian parish Medņu landlord V. Fistenbergs built a rectory. It was also damaged during the wars, also as the church, because it was placed on the Daugavpils highroad's side. Archives of the parish were destroyed during the French War and especially during the First World War.

