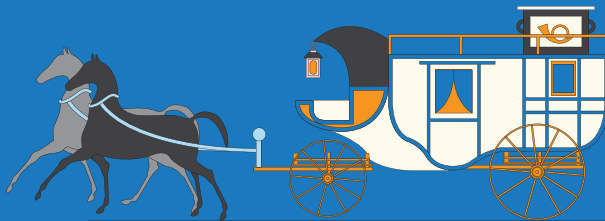
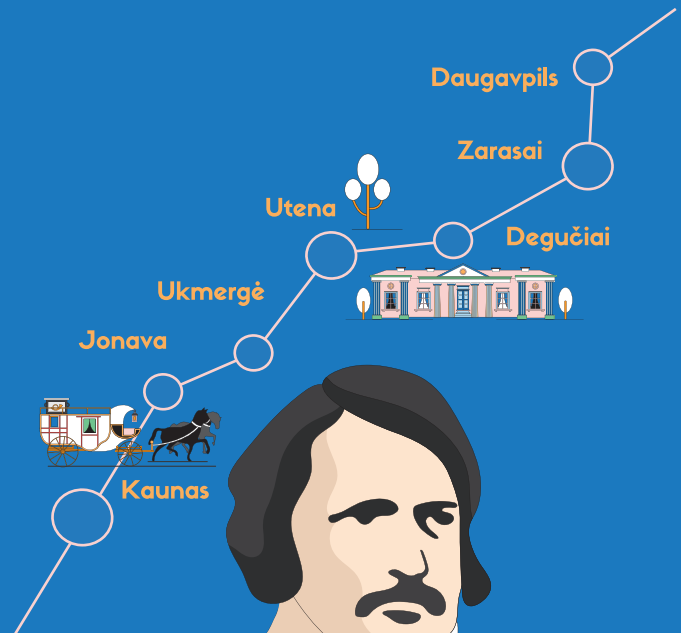


**EWELINA RZEWUSKA**  
Wife of Honoré de Balzac



# WHAT DID BALZAC GET TO SEE?

FROM KAUNAS TO DAUGAVPILS  
ALONG THE OLD POSTAL ROUTE



## FROM KAUNAS TO DAUGAVPILS ALONG THE OLD POSTAL ROUTE

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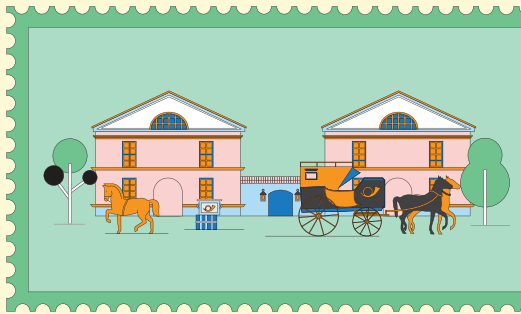
As early as in 1826, it was decided to build a new road from the capital of the Russian Empire to Warsaw and the route was to pass across Daugavpils and Kaunas. The construction work was somewhat hampered by the uprising of 1831, so heavy traffic on the new postal route began in 1836 only and gradually lead to the development and growth of the towns and villages alongside the road.

History tells us that on the 14th of March, 1843, while driving along St. Petersburg – Warsaw road, French writer Honoré de Balzac changed horses at Utena post office. The writer was going to visit Evelina Rzewuska-Hanska, a Polish aristocrat living in St. Petersburg, whom he married a few years later. Although only one such stop was recorded in the archives (it is true that Balzac stayed overnight in Tauragė in the same year), it allows us to imagine and wonder what the author of collection of novels "Human Comedy" could have seen while traveling along the old postal route from Kaunas to Daugavpils... This section of the road cost the imperial treasury 1.225 million rubles (6060 rubles per kilometer), so we hope that the trip was comfortable!



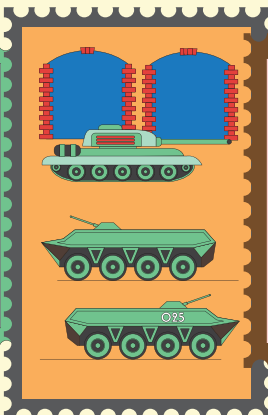
The aim of the project is to promote cross-border tourism in Lithuania and Latvia by preserving cultural heritage and publicizing tourism services.

The contents of this are the sole responsibility of Kaunas City Municipal Administration and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union.



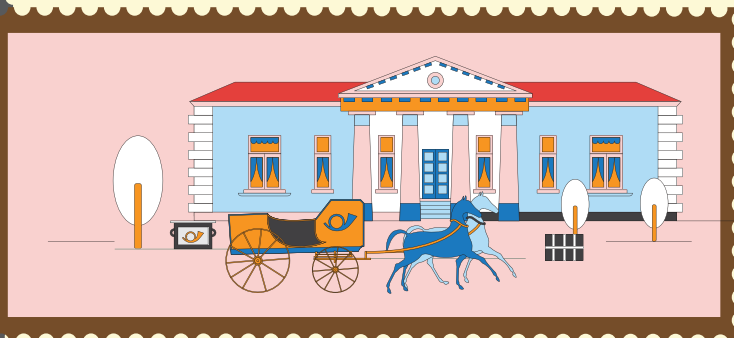
## KAUNAS HORSE POST STATION ROTUŠĖS SQUARE 17, 18, 19, 20, KAUNAS

Balzac saw Kaunas transformed from a provincial town to the center of the province. The horse post station was at the very heart of Kaunas, in the town hall square, so the writer could have also admired the "white swan" – Kaunas town hall. After all, just three decades ago, the square was full of Napoleon army soldiers...



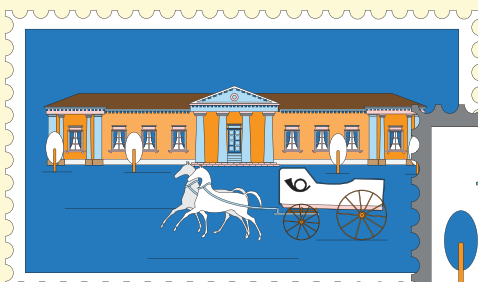
## THE 6TH FORT OF KAUNAS FORTRESS (EXPOSITION OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT IN VYTAUTAS THE GREAT WAR MUSEUM IN KAUNAS) K. BARŠAUSKO ST. 91

Although we do not know whether our hero had at least stepped out of the carriage in Kaunas, we can guarantee that, unfortunately, he did not see the city surrounded by a fortress, because he died in 1850, immediately after the marriage to the love of his life, whom he traveled to see in St. Petersburg... Despite that fact that Kaunas no longer needs to be protected from anything, you can still see the 6th Fort of Kaunas Fortress, which was built at the end of the 19th century and houses a great exposition of military equipment in Vytautas the Great War Museum.



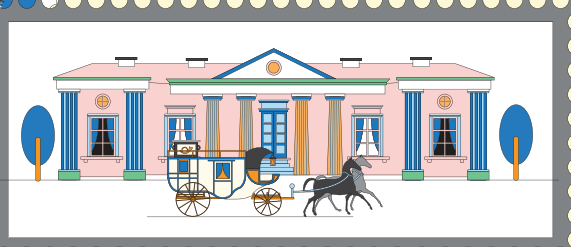
## HORSE POST OFFICE BUILDING COMPLEX J. BASANAVIČIAUS ST. 3, JONAVA

Jonava horse post station was built in 1833–1835 on an important artery of the town, connecting the bridge over river Neris and the former house of the road guards. Was the pioneer of the realistic novels impressed by the picturesque slopes of river Neris? Maybe he didn't even see them, as after all, it is said that he used to work as much as 16 hours per day... But perhaps working while riding in a carriage was uncomfortable?



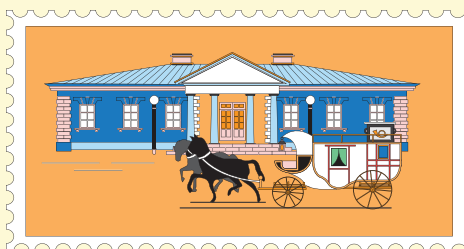
## UKMERGĖ POST OFFICE BUILDING COMPLEX KAUNO ST. 80, 82A, UKMERGĖ

Balzac did not make it to Ukmergė! Because back then there was no Ukmergė, as until 1918 the town was called Vilkenberg, Vilkamerge, and finally Vilkmergė. At that time the traffic there was very intense, as the town was crossed by two railroads: St. Petersburg – Warsaw and Vilnius – Riga. So, for a tired traveler, there really had to be something to see and to do...



## BERNOTIŠKĖS CHECKPOINT BUILDING ON THE POSTAL ROUTE ST. PETERSBURG – WARSAW UKMERGĖ DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY, BERNOTIŠKĖS VILLAGE

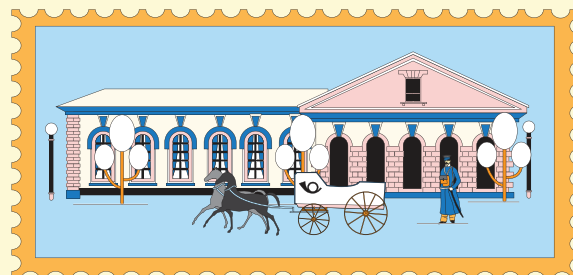
Whether he wanted or not, Balzac had to stop here. After all, the patrols of the checkpoint or "stražarkas", had to check who was travelling along the road, if anyone was searching for that person for any reason. A road toll also had to be taken.



## UTENA POST OFFICE BUILDING COMPLEX

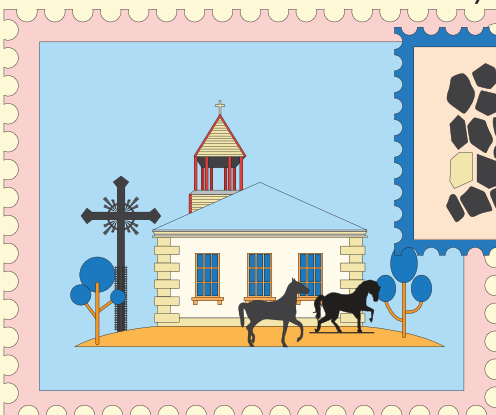
J. BASANAVIČIAUS ST. 36, UTENA

So, it was here, where Utena School of Arts is located today, that the tired horses were replaced and the French writer rested himself, while rushing to the Polish aristocrat, to whom many of his letters were addressed. At the yard of the former station you will also see a passenger stagecoach and perhaps there you will also open one of Balzac's novels?



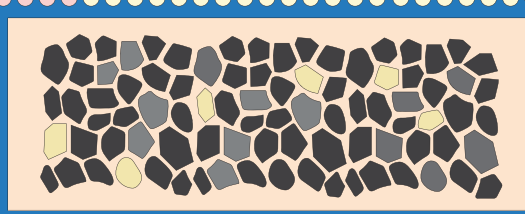
## DAUGAVPILS HORSE POST STATION LĀČPLĒŠA ST. 20, DAUGAVPILS

Daugavpils horse post station is located at the very center of the city. Specifically, in the old town, a little to the south of the current Unity Square. Since Balzac still had a good five hundred kilometers from here to his final destination, he could have possibly gotten acquainted with the cultural life of the city.



## DEGUČIAI POST OFFICE BUILDING COMPLEX (DEGUČIAI CHAPEL OF ST. ANTANAS PADUVIETIS) ZARASŲ ST. 25, DEGUČIAI

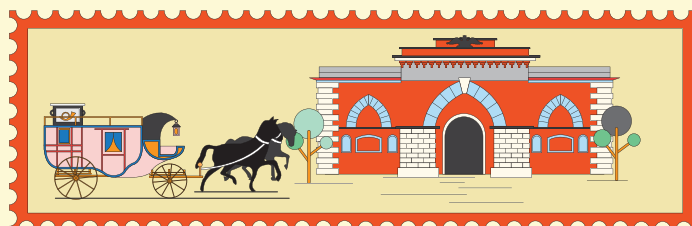
Now the building, which has even been used for film screenings, serves the needs of the faithful, but when Balzac's carriage was rumbling nearby, nothing like that was happening at the station. It was a real station, surrounded by many lakes. Well, swimming in March might be too cold, but maybe breathing-in some fresh air was popular in those days as well?



## SECTION OF THE OLD POST PAVEMENT

VYTAUTO ST., ZARASAI

As he did not visit Ukmergė, neither did Balzac visit Zarasai. After all, in 1836, Tsar Nicholas I came here to see the new highway and other progress. He really liked the town and in the honor of his son he even decided to rename the town Alexandrovsky. After the advisers amended it, as late as until 1918, Zarasai was, at least officially, called Novoaleksandrovsk.



## DAUGAVPILS FORTRESS NIKOLAJA ST. 5, DAUGAVPILS

If you are not in a hurry to see your beloved, it is definitely worth spending more time in Daugavpils. More precisely, in the Daugavpils Fortress, the construction of which Balzac had to witness. After all, the first bricks of the fortress were laid back in 1810, in preparation for the impending war with Napoleon, while the construction works were completed in 1878 only. It is a unique object that resembles the silhouette of a sun, star, turtle or even a bat from a bird's eye view.