

RESTORATION OF BARON VON BEHR'S WEDDING CHAIR

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Two antique dining chairs were restored during the reconstruction of Pope Manor in the Ventspils region several years ago, and a more recent project involved renovation of Baron von Behr's wedding chair found in Zlēkas Evangelical Lutheran Church. According to historical photos, Pope Manor dining hall had more than 11 chairs. Another chair, with similar craftsmanship qualities, but different purpose, was also found in Zlēkas Church tower. It might be a wedding chair by its attributes. Its backrest still contained raised relief of date – the year 1886 and letter marks. That is exactly the year that Friedrich von Behr, the owner of the Zlēkas Manor, got married and the date suggests that this could be his wedding chair. Marks of the initials clearly show the "v" and "B", or the von Behr. The initial of the name is unreadable as it has been lost almost completely. So, it is not clear whether it is Baron's chair or the chair of his wife Wilhelmina. The first letter of the name was not reinterpreted. When crafting a new part, its markings remained untouched. The initial letter of von Behr's surname was restored. Chair is made of solid oak. Backrest and the seat have Rattan mesh. Many elements of the chair have been lost over time, such as moulding, ornamental backrest knobs, spindles, Rattan seat netting. Elements had become disjointed, and many of them have been lost over time. The most valuable of the missing parts is top slat. Analysis of design traits of other furniture commissioned by baron von Behr was helpful in restoring all missing parts that were recreated after other art pieces held by the family and memories of art historian Imants Lancmanis. Elements of the chair were installed back, new details were dyed, coated and Rattan seat was restored.



Chair after restoration
Photo: Aigars Pilenieks



Chair after restoration at Zlēkas Evangelical Lutheran Church
Photo: Aigars Pilenieks



Chair before the restoration
Photo: Aigars Pilenieks



Making new oak parts
Photo: Aigars Pilenieks



The process of gluing the structure of the chair
Photo: Aigars Pilenieks



The model from which the woodcut of the heraldic bear was made
Photo: Roberts Grinbergs



Making new oak profile slats
Photo: Aigars Pilenieks



Reconstruction of missing heraldry
Photo: Aigars Pilenieks



Reconstruction of missing heraldry
Photo: Aigars Pilenieks



Reconstruction of missing heraldry
Photo: Aigars Pilenieks



New oak heraldry have been incorporated
Photo: Aigars Pilenieks

Questions that arose before and during the restoration:

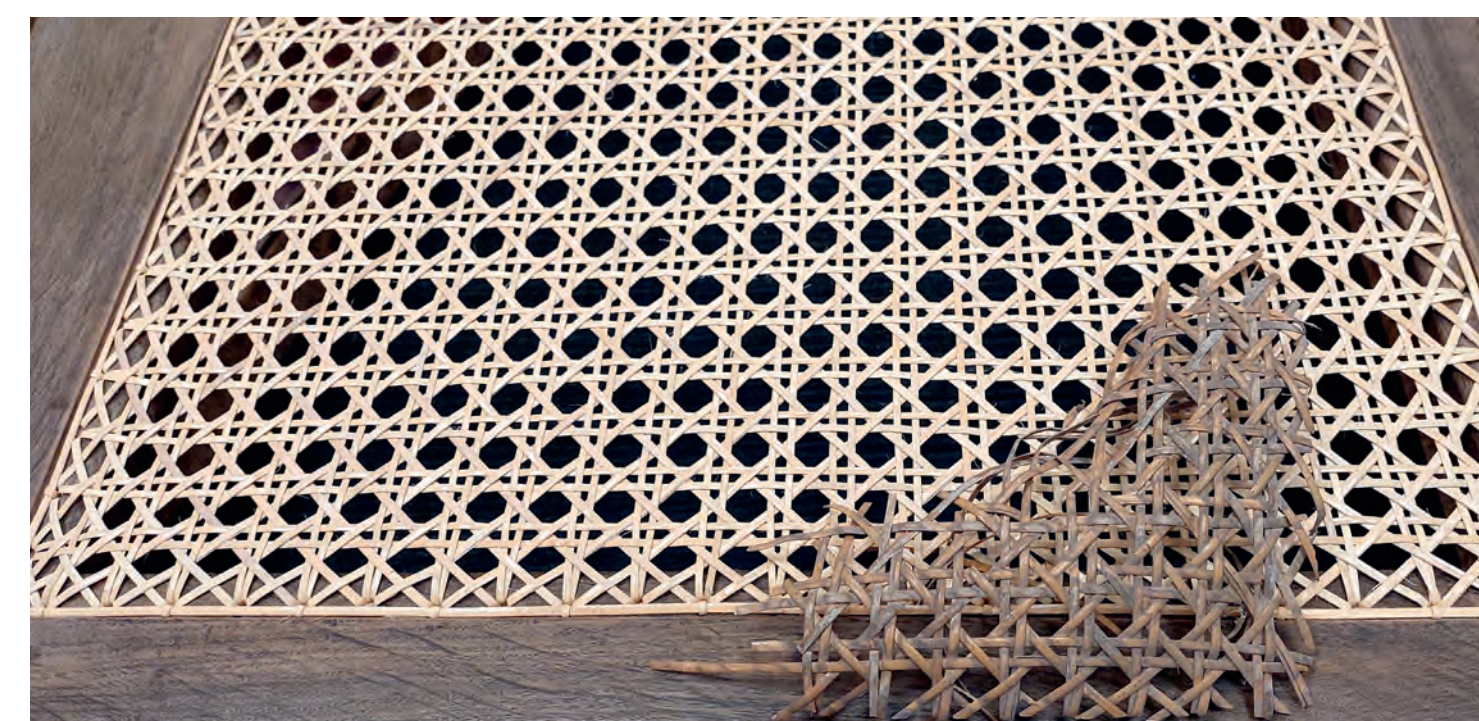
- Where was the chair initially?
- Who made it and what was its primary purpose?
- Was restoring initials only in the surname the right decision?
- Did reconstruction of missing heraldry carvings alter the authentic design of the chair?



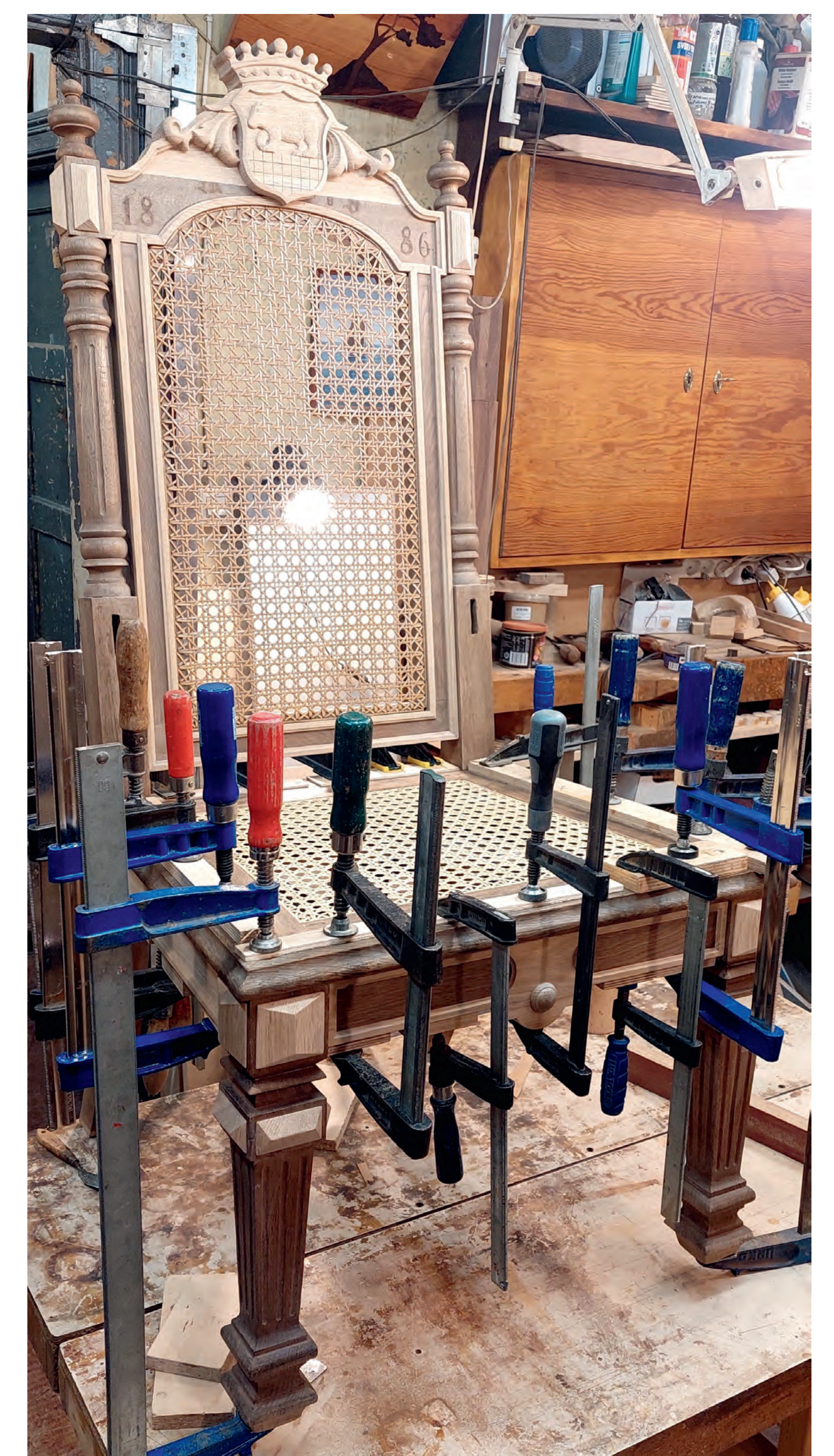
Reconstruction of missing letters
Photo: Aigars Pilenieks



Reconstruction of missing letters from wood
Photo: Aigars Pilenieks



Reconstruction rattan seat netting
Photo: Aigars Pilenieks



The process of gluing structure of chair
Photo: Aigars Pilenieks



New profile parts have been incorporated
Photo: Aigars Pilenieks