

## **Exhibition Dedicated to the Bicentenary of Professor Nikolay Ivanovich Pirogov (1810–1881) in the Pauls Stradins Museum of the History of Medicine in Riga**

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In 2010, we celebrated the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Nikolay Pirogov. He was a distinguished Russian surgeon who created the foundations for the concept of topography anatomy in surgery. He was also the founder of battlefield surgery in Russia, and introduced many new innovations. Later he was elected a corresponding member of the St Petersburg Academy of Sciences (1847) and was widely known as an educator and public activist. To commemorate this date, Pauls Stradins Museum of the History of Medicine in Riga organised an exhibition about the life and work of Nikolay Pirogov. The official opening of the exhibition took place during the international conference of oral surgeons and dentists held on May 21, 2011 in Riga and the exhibition remained open until December 1, 2010. The total number of the exhibits was 184, of which 146 came from the basic collections of Pauls Stradins Museum, 36 from other ancillary collections. The curators of the exhibition were Valda Pundure and Ērina Drača; the design was made by Zigurds Galūns.

Pirogov was born on November 25, 1810 in Moscow. His father was a wealthy civil servant and Nikolay was the 13<sup>th</sup> and the youngest child in the family. At first he was taught at home, after which he attended a private school. It was there that he decided that medicine would be his life. In this, a great deal of influence was wielded by Professor Efrem Mukhin, who worked for the Faculty of Medicine at the Moscow University and was a friend of the Pirogov family. Mukhin helped Nikolay to deal with the only problem that he had when he wanted to enter the university – he was only 14 years old.

Upon completing his medical studies in 1828, Pirogov was sent to the Institute of Professors at the University of Dorpat (Tartu), where he wrote and defended his doctoral thesis on the litigation of ventral aorta (1832). From there on, he spent several years abroad, continuing his education. From 1836 to 1840



Figure 1. Oil painting "Pirogov in Sevastopol". Artist: Irēna Stradiņa (1949). From the collections of Pauls Stradiņš Museum of the History of Medicine in Riga.

Pirogov worked at the University of Dorpat, after which, until 1856, he taught at the St Petersburg Academy of Medicine and Surgery. Then he was appointed as curator of the education in the Odessa and Kyiv districts.

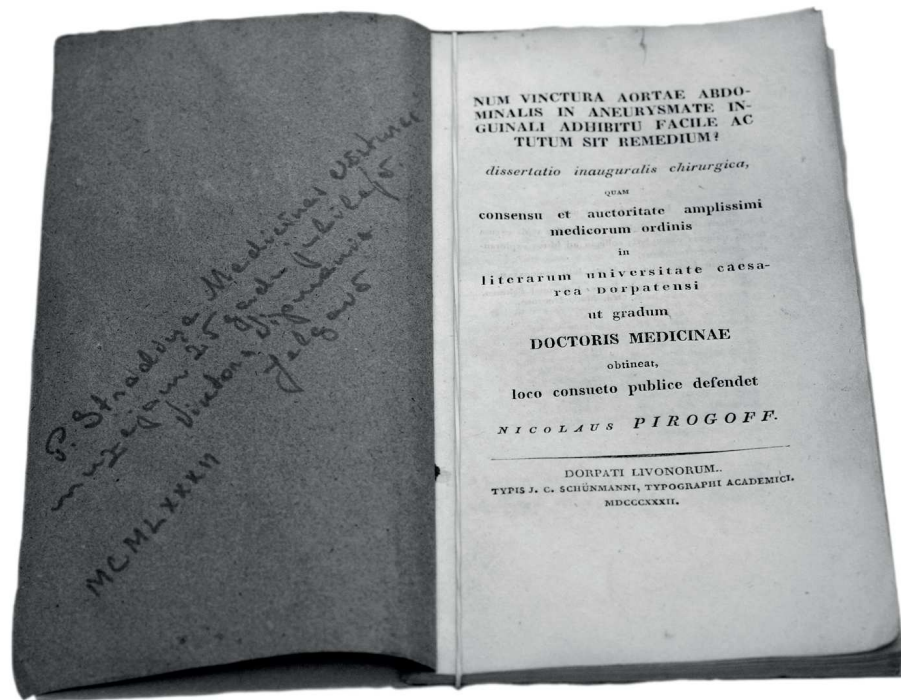
Pirogov did have links to Latvia. He visited Riga for the first time on his return from Germany in 1835, when he was treated at a local field hospital. While working as a professor at the University of Dorpat, he visited Riga on several occasions to conduct complicated surgeries, provide consultations to patients and help in the training of doctors. He would later call that one of the most important periods of his professional life.

During the course of his life, Pirogov experienced several major wars. He praised the work of nurses who worked on the front line. The professor was highly decorated for his work and his achievements in medicine. Late in life, professor Pirogov lived at his estate at the village of Vishnya in Ukraine. It was there that he passed away on December 5, 1881.

This anniversary exhibition presented the life and work history of Professor Nikolay Pirogov. Materials from the Pauls Stradins Museum of the History of Medicine collection regarding professor Pirogov have been brought to bear for this purpose.

The special Nikolay Pirogov collection of the museum itself contains more than 200 items. It is the third largest collection of items related to professor Pirogov, larger ones being found only at the National Pirogov Estate Museum in Vishnya

Figure 2.  
Dissertation.  
Pirogov's thesis on whether ligation of the ventral aorta is an easy and safe treatment of aneurism in the groin, Dorpat, 1832 (in Latin). From the collections of Pauls Stradiņš Museum of the History of Medicine in Riga.



in Ukraine and the Military Medical Museum in St Petersburg. The collection features objects related to pathological anatomy and nineteenth-century medical instruments. Most of these items are presented in artworks – paintings, engravings, drawings, lithographs, drawings from anatomy books, posters, bookplates, photo reproductions, postcards, stamps, sculptures, and medals. Of particular value are archival documents, manuscripts, and rare printed editions of Pirogov's books.

Besides, many items are on display in the permanent exhibition of the museum. Professor Pauls Stradiņš (1896–1958), the founder of the Museum of the History of Medicine in Riga, planned the museum so as to demonstrate the development of the history of medicine from prehistoric times, right up to modern medical advances focussing on the development of medicine in the Baltic region and Russia.

Unsurprisingly, Professor Nikolay Pirogov also played an important role in developing the original concept for the museum's main exhibition. A key element in the museum's permanent exhibition is a portrait painted by the artist Irēna Stradiņa (1925–1972), the daughter of Professor Pauls Stradiņš. It is called *Pirogov in Sevastopol* (1949). (Fig. 1) The painting was Irēna's diploma work in preparation for her graduation from the Latvian Academy of Art. Subject to the story of the picture was inspired by professor Stradiņš and he, despite his busyness, posed as Pirogov for her. The portrait was immediately recognised as a balanced, compelling, challenging and promising work by the young artist. It became a symbol of professor Stradiņš' family traditions, and of his deep understanding of and respect for the history of medicine.



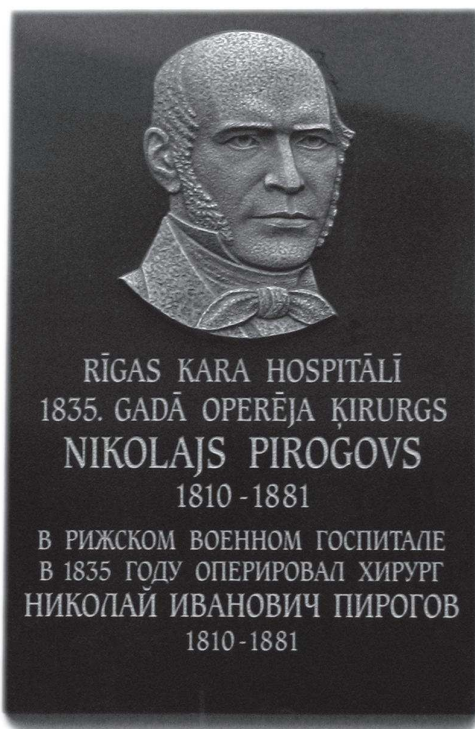
Figure 3.  
Pathological  
anatomy  
preparation  
from Pirogov's  
collection.  
19<sup>th</sup> century.  
Sequesters of the  
tibia. From the  
collections of Pauls  
Stradiņš Museum  
of the History of  
Medicine in Riga.

The exhibition displayed a wide array of documents, objects, books, brochures, postcards, photos and some artworks (engravings, paintings and sculptures) related to the life and activities of Nikolay Pirogov. Even the stamps issued in honour of his 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth and some feature film posters were on exhibit. Among the most important items displayed were Pirogov's thesis on "Whether ligation of the ventral aorta is an easy and safe treatment in the case of aneurism of the groin" (Dorpat, 1832; in Latin and Russian) (Fig. 2), Pirogov's diploma from the Russian Association of Surgeons (1894), documents related to the acceptance of Pirogov at the Moscow University (1824), photos of prescriptions written by Pirogov (originals at the Pirogov Museum in Vishnya), as well as some objects of pathological anatomy from the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 3), medical and surgical instruments of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, lithographs of the battlefields of the Crimean War (Fig. 4), etc. Some of the anatomical drawings were made by Pirogov himself. Some of the items displayed on the exhibition were dedicated to his teachers Johann Gotthelf Fischer von Waldheim, Johann Christian Moyer, Efrem Mukhin, Justus Christian von Loder, etc.

The first editions of some books by Pirogov were also on display, such as *The Surgical Anatomy of Arterial Trunks and Fascia* (Dorpat, 1840); *Use of Alabaster Casts in the Treatment of Simple and Complex Fractures and the Transportation of Injured Troops from the Battlefield* (Moscow, 1852); *The Surgical Anatomy of Arterial Trunks and Fascia* (Leipzig and Heidelberg, 1860); *Fundamentals of General Field Surgery* (Leipzig, 1864); *Fundamental of General Field Surgery* (Dresden, 1865); *Report on a Visit to Battlefield Sanitary Institutions in Germany* (St Petersburg, 1871); *Life Questions: Diary of an Old Doctor* (Stuttgart, 1894).



Figure 4. Lithograph: The first group of nurses who worked under Pirogov's leadership in Sevastopol during the Crimean War, 1854 – 1855. From the collections of Pauls Stradiņš Museum of the History of Medicine in Riga.



Another remarkable fact is that the restored memorial plate dedicated to Professor Nikolay Pirogov was re-opened on the exact date (November 24, 2010) of the professor's 200th anniversary on the territory of the former Riga Military Hospital. (Fig. 5)

Figure 5. Memorial plate dedicated to Professor Nikolay Pirogov. Artist: Jānis Strupulis. Opened November 24, 2010 on the territory of former Riga Military hospital.