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The Neelovs Fond from the State Archive of the Smolensk Region: Russian Public Figures of the 19th Century in the Midst of Rural Everyday Life

Abstract

The article analyzes sources in the family fond “The Neelovs” from the State Archive of the Smolensk Region. The main body of documents relates to the history of the 19th century and has not yet been introduced into scientific use. The Neelovs, nobles of the Gzhatsk uezd, who were included in the first part of the genealogical book of the nobles of the Smolensk gubernia, participated in major events of the 19th century on national and regional level. The article is to describe the content of the fond and to assess the information potential of its sources for studying the history of a noble provincial family in the context of Russian history. It establishes

that the documents differ in their origin and significance. Recordkeeping documents and those of personal provenance are numerous and informative. Among recordkeeping documents of particular interest are documents of economic nature and the Neelov brothers' records of service; among sources of personal provenance of most interest are travel notes and epistolary heritage of the family members. There are numerous documents reflecting the Neelov brothers' life and career, many of which concern well-known Russian professor of the Military Academy and writer N. D. Neelov and the director of the department of agriculture of the Ministry of State Property and Senator D.D. Neelov. The author concludes that the identified sources allow to recreate the history of a rural noble family before and after the abolition of seldom, to study its economic situation, culture, everyday life, and evolution of the social role of nobility in provincial life. The fond content also clarifies socio-economic processes in the midst of peasantry, history and repercussions of the major events of the 19th century: the war of 1812, the Polish uprising of 1831, preparation of the abolition of seldom, activities of the Zemstvo institutions; it helps to connect the history of the family and the history of the country.

Keywords

Sources, noble family, Neelovs, Smolensk gubernia, noble culture, abolition of seldom, Polish uprisings

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