

From the Family Album



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The PAS Archives hold photographs of Marie Skłodowska-Curie and her family, as well as medals and personal letters. They are valuable resources for studying the great scientist's life and achievements

Alongside the documents of the Polish Academy of Sciences, the PAS Archives in Warsaw hold the heritage left behind by many great scientists – over 500 in total. These bestow a unique character on the collection and provide fascinating material for numerous studies, not just biographical. Several collections include original letters written by Marie Skłodowska-Curie.

Marie and Irène's letters

Materials formerly belonging to Ludwik Wertenstein (1887-1945), a close associate of Skłodowska-Curie in Paris, director of the Radiological Laboratory at the Warsaw Scientific Association and professor at the Free Polish University in Warsaw, include 14 letters written by Skłodowska-Curie between 1908-1931. In 1955, the Archives bought some of Wertenstein's assets from his daughter Wanda Wertenstein (1917-2003). Such purchases were made relatively frequently until the 1990s; nowadays new acquisitions are largely donations. Archives of Stanisław Kalinowski, professor at the Warsaw Polytechnic and director of the Geophysical Observatory in Świder, include two letters dated 1909 and 1922. In the latter, Skłodowska-Curie wrote, "In December in Paris, there will be a meeting of the Committee on Intellectual Cooperation. I will be able to discuss the matter with the Committee members, and perhaps we will be able to initiate a practical project."

Materials donated by Marie's sister Helena Skłodowska-Szalay contain Marie's family correspondence, providing fascinating insights. The 64 letters from Marie's daughter Irène to Helena, written in French, span the period between 1945-1955. Irène includes a lot of personal information, talks about the difficulties she encounters in Paris, and mentions

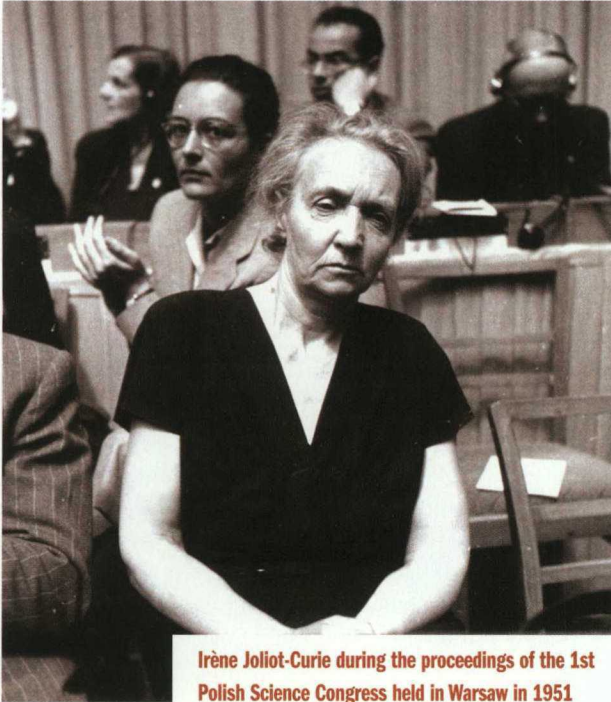
her intention to visit Warsaw. In two letters from 1947, she comments on an American film about her mother; the film is also widely discussed in the heritage left behind by the geophysicist Edward Stenz. In a letter dated 14 July 1950, he wrote that he is no longer receiving correspondence, suggesting that it could be getting confiscated. There are also five letters written between 1948-1958 by Marie's granddaughter, Hélène Langevin. These mainly discuss family matters, although she also mentions the celebrations of Marie and Pierre Curie held in 1956 in China. Equally fascinating are the three letters by Frédéric Joliot-Curie, dating between 1950-1958, and invitations to the 2nd World Congress



Below: Marie Skłodowska-Curie in 1891, the year she left Poland for France. Right: Ludwik Wertenstein, outstanding physicist and close associate of Marie Skłodowska-Curie



PAS Archives



Irène Joliot-Curie during the proceedings of the 1st Polish Science Congress held in Warsaw in 1951

FACULTÉ DES SCIENCES DE PARIS

INSTITUT DU RADIUM

Paris, le 17 mai 1929

LABORATOIRE CURIE

1, Rue Pierre-Curie, Paris (6^e)

Kierowny Panie,

Dziękuję za nadany artykuł i za obietnicę
zapisać się do wiadomości. Co do zaproszenia
to żałuję, że przyjąć go nie mogę. Jednak
jednak przekonana, że program przyjęcia mnie
w Warszawie nie pozwoli na zabranie o cha-
rakterze prywatnym. Nie mogę na to, albowiem

wątpię tym razem porozumiewać z polskimi
osobami i zobaczyć eksperyment z ich pra-
ci i pracowni, gdyż te rzeczy nie dadzą się
pogodzić z programem uroczystości o cha-
rakterze oficjalnym i popularnym.

Z ogromną uprzejmością i szacunkiem

M. Skłodowska-Curie

One of Marie Skłodowska-Curie's letters to Ludwik Wertenstein, preserved in the PAS Archives (dated 1929)

of Supporters of Peace. There is also correspondence from Eugénie Cotton, one of Marie's pupils, and condolences on the passing of Irène.

Prof. Hurwic's files

Some of the most notable materials from the chemist Prof. Józef Hurwic include documents referring to the creation of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Museum. The Museum is the source of the majority of photographs held at the PAS Archives. Employees from both institutions came together to prepare an exhibition on Skłodowska-Curie's life, presented in many language versions across the globe. The exhibition "Polish Nobel Prize Winners," the publication of the book "Marie Skłodowska-Curie: Lady Scholar," and the creation of a film screenplay all took place in 2003. An exhibition "Women in Science" was organized in 2011; there are also numerous lectures aimed at young people and students at Polish universities and the University of the Third Age. ■

Further reading:

Krajewska H., Móravski K., Sobieszczak-Marciniak M. (eds.). (2003). *Polscy nobliści* [Polish Nobel Winners]. Wydawnictwo Archiwum Polskiej Akademii Nauk, Muzeum Woli - Oddział Muzeum Historycznego m.st. Warszawy i Muzeum Marii Skłodowskiej-Curie w Warszawie.



Helena Szalay (1866-1961), Marie's sister, was a teacher and educator, Warsaw school inspector, and author of the memorial "Reminiscences of Marie Skłodowska-Curie"