



UNIWERSYTET
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The twentieth anniversary of Uniwersytet Opolski (Opolski University) and the sixtieth anniversary of the transfer of the State Higher School of Pedagogy from Wrocław to Opole make up a special opportunity to commemorate individual persons, facts and documents related to the history of the oldest institution of higher learning in the region of Opole.

The idea of creating Muzeum Uniwersytetu Opolskiego (Museum of Opolski University), the centre for storing, providing documentation, and exhibiting the mementoes, relics of the past and works of art was initiated in 2012 by the Rector of Opolski University, prof Stanisław Sławomir Nicieja. Being a biographical historian, author of numerous monographs and articles that deal with the establishment, development and activities of the Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna (Higher School of Pedagogy), followed by Opolski University, including the work entitled *Alma Mater Opoliensis. Ludzie, fakty, wydarzenia* (*Alma Mater Opoliensis. People, facts, events*); published in 2004), and acting with the sense of responsibility and duty of securing and preserving the heritage of the first institution of higher learning in Opole, he came to the conclusion that the Museum of Opolski University should be the location for storing the exhibits that testify to the scientific and cultural past of the school's past and can serve as the source of inspiration for new research and creative initiatives.

The Museum's mission is to preserve the documents and relics testifying to the history and contemporary days of Opolski University, the largest institution of higher learning in the region of Opole, which carries out a variety of research and educational tasks and serves as an important regional culture-building centre. It will also play an educational role such as promoting the knowledge about the University's history and popularising valuable and interesting aspects of selected academic disciplines, culture and art by way of organising exhibitions, meetings and lectures. The exhibition of "Alma Mater Opoliensis" is the first one of the series and organised on the occasion of opening the Museum of Opolski University.

The Museum of Opolski University is housed in Collegium Maius and occupies five of its chambers that are adjacent to the chapel of St. Adalbert (św. Wojciech in Polish). The history of this place dates back to the 10th century and is linked to the bishop Wojciech Sławnikowic and the years he spent in Opole. The chapel was consecrated in the 1460s and was devastated by fires and war many a time. Its present-day shape was finalised in 1663.



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University of Opole took steps to revitalise the dilapidated chapel in 2001. The commitment of Rev. Albert Glaeser from the Faculty of Theology and the financial sponsorship of Hendrik Foth, an eminent lawyer from Düsseldorf and the holder of honorary doctorate at Opolski University, as well as the efforts of the university authorities led to the restoration of the historic chapel of St. Adalbert, which is now part of the museum's space. The opening of the Museum of Opolski University on 10 March 2014 will be preceded by "Alma Mater Opoliensis" exhibition which deals with the selected events from the history of Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna (Higher School of Pedagogy) and the efforts to found Opolski University, all shown in chamber I and II. Chamber III is a gallery of the portraits of university's vice-chancellors, their insignia, university chronicles and occasional medals and mementoes.

Chamber IV is a place for permanent exhibiting antique books from the collection of the Main Library of Opolski University. This chamber is also a venue for displaying the holders of honorary doctorates at Higher School of Pedagogy and Opolski University. A separate corner in this chamber is designated for the two books, both displayed in their digital form, which document, in a detailed way, the history of Higher School of Pedagogy and Opolski University. They include:

- Stanisław Sławomir Nicieja, *Alma Mater Opoliensis. People, facts, events. Jubilee edition honoring the 50th anniversary of Higher School of Pedagogy and the 10th anniversary of Opolski University*, Opole 2004
- Maria Nowakowska, *Preface and chapter Role of the Social Committee for Establishing a University in Opole (1988-1994)*, included in *Road to Establishing Opolski University and its maturity after 18 years*, ed. by M Nowakowska, Opole 2012, pp. 1-46.

This place also presents information on the fields of study and majors that are offered by Opolski University.

Chamber V promotes the faculties of Opolski University, its Main Library and Opolski University Publishing Haus. A significant part is devoted to the details of students' life, "Students - scholarly activities - culture - entertainment - sports," and may appear as a multimedia-enabled presentation. There are also two more presentations available in this chamber: "Golden Series of Open Lectures" and "Buildings and Surroundings of Opolski University."

The exhibits housed in the chapel of St. Adalbert comprise painting and sacred art. Several of them have been lent by Diocese Museum in Opole. The Museum also displays historic



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apparatus and instruments used in teaching physics, all lent by the Museum of Physics at Opolski University. The furniture on display in museum chambers has been lent by Museum of Opolski Silesia for the period of several years, all within the cooperation program with our university. We wish to express our gratitude to the management of the said institution for their generous act.

The exhibits also include the bone fragments of *metoposaurus diagnosticus* (late Triassic period) excavated at Krasiejów and deposited at the Museum of Opolski University as part of the collection of the Chair of Paleobiology at our university. Additionally, the exhibition features the medals and trophy cups from the collection of the Department of Physical Education and Sports of our university.

The exhibition, which is under way, is the first attempt to recreate the facts and to display selected aspects related to the rich history of Opolski University. We wish to thank warmly everyone who helped us in all substantial issues, lent materials and exhibits, and assisted us with the organising of the Museum of Opolski University, as well as with the preparing of our first exhibition. The authors and co-authors of the exhibition's architecture and graphic layout are architects Mr Marek Mikulski and Mr Maciej Mikulski. The exhibition's preparation was consulted with Ms Krystyna Lenart-Juszczewska.

dr Wanda Matwiejczuk