



## Polish Physicists in Philately

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Famous people and important events become subjects of various postal-philatelic items: stamps, postal stationery (i.e. postal cards or envelopes with an imprinted stamp), special cancellations. In this article we will present philatelic items related to Polish physicists.

Following the chronological order of periods of their activity we begin with Karol OLSZEWSKI (1846–1915) and Zygmunt WRÓBLEWSKI (1845–1888). They were both professors at the Jagellonian University: Olszewski from 1876, Wróblewski from 1882. They investigated low temperature phenomena. They were the first to liquify the components of air: nitrogen and oxygen, in 1883, they also liquified and solidified carbon dioxide. They determined critical parameters for hydrogen, liquefaction of which was achieved in 1896



by Karol von Linde. The Polish Post devoted to Karol Olszewski and Zygmunt Wróblewski a stamp issued in 1951 on the occasion of the 1-st Congress of Polish Science, and an illustrated stationery card issued in 1964 for the 600-th anniversary of Jagellonian University. The illustration on this card shows the historical apparatus for liquefying gases.



Maria SKŁODOWSKA-CURIE (1867–1934) was honoured with a great number of stamps, postal stationery and special cancellations – one can assembly them into a large collection. More philatelic items were probably devoted only to the pope John Paul II and to Copernicus.

Maria Skłodowska-Curie often appears together with her husband Pierre Curie on stamps of earlier editions. We can mention here the stamps issued by France and its colonies (1938, 22 stamps of common design), Monaco (1938), Afganistan (1938), and Panama (1939–1949, altogether 22 stamps of repeated design). In



Poland in 1938 two postal stationery cards with the effigy of Maria Skłodowska-Curie were issued: a 15 groszy one for inland mail and a 30 groszy one, with bilingual inscriptions, for foreign mail. After the 2-nd World War a number of stamps were issued: in the series “The Polish Culture” (1947), on the occasion of the 1-st Congress of Polish Science (1951), in the series “The Famous Poles” (1963), for the 100-th anniversary of Maria Skłodowska-Curie birthday (1967), for the 100-th anniversary of the discovery of radium and polonium (1998), and also an envelope (1993) and a postal card (1994). The rarest stamp featuring Maria Skłodowska-Curie is the Turkish one, issued on the occasion of the International Women’s Congress which took place in Istanbul in 1935. The catalogue price of this stamp is now 400 euros. Two stamps of Suriname from 1950 are also very rare. Many stamps related to Maria Skłodowska-Curie were issued in 1967 at the 100-th anniversary of her birth, and later in 1998, at the 100-th anniversary of the discovery of polonium and radium. Other anniversaries of her birth, several anniversaries of her death, and anniversaries of rewarding her with the first (1903) and the second (1908) Nobel Prizes were also commemorated with stamps and special cancellations. We reproduce some of them. Apart from stamps, we show a few special cancellations: a rare Polish one “50 years of the discovery of polonium and radium” (used in 1948 in seven towns), the French cancellation “100 years from Maria Curie birth”, and two items somehow related to Maria Skłodowska-Curie: the special cancellation “25 years of the Maria Skłodowska-Curie University in Lublin”, and the machine franking of the Electric Power Company in Tomaszów Mazowiecki which is located in the Maria Skłodowska-Curie Street (this topical franking is the “discovery” of the author of this article).





Marian SMOLUCHOWSKI (1872–1917) was professor at the University of Lvov, and from 1913 at the Jagellonian University. He was a many-sided scientist, active in various fields of natural sciences, but mainly in physics. Most important are his works on kinetic theory of matter. On the basis of this theory he explained, independently of Albert Einstein, the Brownian mo-



tion (the Einstein-Smoluchowski formula). He also presented statistical interpretation of the 2-nd law of thermodynamics. The Polish Post honoured him in 1938 with two illustrated postal cards (similar to those for Maria Skłodowska-Curie), and with another card issued in 1964 on the occasion of the 600-th anniversary of Jagellonian University, showing the building of the Institute of Physics named after Marian Smoluchowski.



Marian DANYSZ (1909–1983) and Jerzy PNIEWSKI (1913–1989) conducted in Warsaw research in the field of high energy nuclear and elementary particle physics. While investigating interactions of cosmic ray particles registered in nuclear emulsions flown to the stratosphere, they discovered in 1952 the first hypernucleus, in 1962 the hypernuclear isomers, and in 1963 were co-authors of the discovery of the first double hypernucleus. In this way Danysz and Pniewski initiated a new branch of physics: the hypernuclear physics, and were allegedly nominated to the Nobel Prize, unfortunately without success. The Polish Post devoted to them the illustrated postal card issued in 1993. The imprinted stamp shows the micro-photograph of the first event interpreted as a decay of a hypernucleus.

