

1 Anna (c. 1201–1265), a Czech princess of the Přemyslid dynasty, Duchess of Silesia and Kraków

✉ The Religious Congregation of the Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union, 16 Bishop Nankier Square



Portrait photo: Wikimedia Commons. Location photo: Fotokón/Shutterstock.

She was the daughter of King Ottokar I of Bohemia and Constance of the Hungarian Árpád dynasty. She was not yet eighteen when she left Bohemia and travelled to Silesia to marry Duke Henry the Pious, the son of St Hedwig of the House of Andechs and Henry I the Bearded.

Henry was not yet known as 'the Pious', and Hedwig had not yet been canonised, but life at the ducal court was modest. Anna, together with her husband, founded churches and monasteries, and brought the Franciscans, the Order of the Cross with the Red Star and the Poor Clares to Silesia; her sister Agnieszka was the prioress of the Poor Clares' convent in Prague.

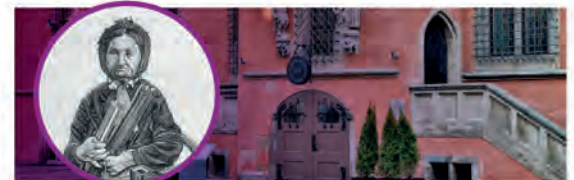
She was widowed under tragic circumstances. Her husband had decided to face the Mongols on the Field of Legnica in 1241. He wanted to emulate his father, Henry the Bearded; he harboured ambitions to unite the country – and perhaps even lay claim to the crown. Unfortunately, the Mongols routed his knights and killed the duke himself. Anna found his body on the battlefield, headless and stripped of his clothes – she recognised her husband by a distinctive mark: six toes on one foot. She then became a pillar of strength for her children, looking after her sons, defusing conflicts between them and helping to rebuild Silesia after the devastation.

A year after her husband's death, she brought Benedictine monks from Opatovice in Bohemia to Krzeszów, and in 1257 the Poor Clares

arrived in Wrocław. In Princess Anna, they found a generous patron, and for almost six centuries the 'Poor Ladies' lived on what is now Bishop Nankier Square. She died on the night of St John the Baptist in 1265 and was buried in the convent church of the Poor Clares (the Ursulines from 1810). Her remains are still there, laid to rest in a glass coffin. It is a special place, as the church houses the Mausoleum of the Silesian Piasts; among other things, it contains the urn holding the heart of Princess Karolina, the last of the Piast princesses, who died in Wrocław in 1707. Opposite the convent building, at the junction of Łaciarska Street and Bishop Nankier Square – perhaps on the very spot where the first Poor Clares brought from Prague once lived – a brick townhouse now stands, featuring an 18th-century statue of Princess Anna. Wearing a veil and a ducal mitre, the princess holds the plans for the first Poor Clares' convent in her hands and gazes towards her favourite foundation.

2 Amalie Renner (1812–1884), 'Ellen-Malchen', a street vendor and a legend of the Świdnicka Cellar

✉ Town Hall, grille from the Świdnicka Cellar (Piwnica Świdnicka) by Jaroslav Vonka, 1 Market Square–Town Hall



Portrait photo: Wikimedia Commons. Location photo: Municipality of Wrocław.

Wrocław grew up at the crossroads of major trade routes running from southern Europe through the Czech Republic and Greater Poland to the Baltic Sea, and from western Europe via Leipzig and Kraków to Ruthenia. From time immemorial, the people of Wrocław grew wealthy through international trade, and with them the city prospered. But it was not only the great merchants who were held in high regard in the city – even pedlars and street vendors could build a reputation, earn respect and achieve lasting fame.

Evidence of this can be found in a bas-relief of a woman selling vegetables on the façade of the Market Hall on Piaskowa Street (perhaps she was the subject of a leaflet published in 1908 to mark the hall's opening: 'Mrs. Zwipeln? The cabbage lady? With a hat, not a headscarf, shady! The goods are fresh, bug-free, and sweet: Every head is a praised-by-all treat!') and in the figurine of Amalie Renner, known as 'Ellen-Malchen', on the grille that once closed off the Świdnicka Cellar. Ellen-Malchen knew every corner of Wrocław. She started working at the age of eleven and, for almost 60 years, would turn up at the Świdnicka Cellar with a basket full of measuring instruments (rulers, set squares), as well as sweets, toy trumpets, dolls and other 'joy-bringing' items. In 1874, the premises' tenant, Adolf Friebe, celebrated Ellen-Malchen's half-century of service by presenting her with a macaroon cake, from which fifty gleaming thalers rolled out as it was being sliced.

Wrocław built its prosperity on trade – the townhouses lining the Market Square bear witness to the financial power of the local merchants – but it was Amalie Renner's diligence and honesty that were immortalised in an urban legend. She was celebrated in verse and prose, and her likeness was painted and reproduced on postcards. Eventually, Ellen-Malchen also graced the ironwork forged for the Świdnicka Cellar by the famous Czech blacksmith Jaroslav Vonka. The grille disappeared immediately after the war; it was not rediscovered until 2015 in a museum storeroom in Warsaw, where it had been catalogued as an unnamed 'post-German surplus'. It was returned to Wrocław and can now be viewed in the Town Hall. Ellen-Malchen is once again waiting for customers.

3 Paula Ollendorff (1860–1938), Wrocław councillor and teacher

✉ New Town Hall, council chamber, 9 Sukiennice

The earliest reference to the city council dates back to 1266, but it was not until seven centuries later that women were first elected to it. In 1919, they were able to take part in universal and secret elections to the council for the first time,

provided they were at least 20 years old and had been living in the capital of Lower Silesia for at least six months. They went to the polls to elect Anna Friedlaender (née Dombrowsky), a woman of independent means, and Paula Ollendorff, a teacher – the first female councillors in the history of Wrocław, and indeed in the history of Germany.



Portrait photo: City Museum of Wrocław. Location photo: Kornelia Głowacka-Wolf/wyborcza.pl.

Both came from Jewish families and had been involved in community work for many years. Paula Ollendorff was particularly popular in Wrocław. When she stood for election as a candidate for the German Democratic Party, she was 59 years old and had an impressive track record. She had graduated from a teacher training college and worked as a teacher not only in Wrocław, but also in Berlin and Budapest. An outstanding organiser, she founded, among other things, a home for children born out of wedlock and a rural farming school; she also established the Wrocław branch of the Jewish Women's Association. She was even awarded the title of honorary elder of the Jewish community.

A councillor like her must have come as a shock to many in Wrocław. She was well-educated in a wide range of subjects, gifted with oratorical talent and a keen social awareness. Her husband, Isidor Ollendorff, was a well-known social activist and lawyer who ran a law firm in Wrocław. In 1890, he became a city councillor and held that position until he died in 1911. He supported his wife, but she earned the respect of the citizens of Wrocław – both men and women – in her own right. She also raised her daughters to be independent women. Helen Ollendorff-Curth became a dermatologist; among other things, she was one of the first female doctors to research genetic skin conditions. Her second daughter, Lizzie, worked as a nurse in military hospitals, caring for soldiers wounded on the front lines of the First World War.

She died as a result of a blood infection. Paula Ollendorff was buried in Jerusalem, but at the Old Jewish Cemetery on Ślężna Street there is a plaque commemorating Wrocław's first female councillor and her daughter, Lizzie Ollendorff. It is also worth visiting the New Town Hall in the Market Square, which predates the first female councillors. It was opened in 1864, when the emancipation movement in Prussia was only just beginning. Women were excluded from public and political life, deemed too 'emotional' and incapable of logical thinking, and – as the historian and politician Heinrich von Treitschke argued – 'political power is by its very nature masculine.' Paula Ollendorff proved him wrong and won a seat on the city council.

4 Clara Immerwahr (1870–1915), chemist

✉ University of Wrocław, 1 University Square



Portrait photo: Wikipedia.org. Location photo: photomaster/Shutterstock.

Women did not attend the University of Wrocław until 1895. However, they were only permitted to attend lectures as auditors and were not awarded any degrees. They attended lectures given by the literary historian Professor Max Koch. "The warm reception given to this innovation by the distinguished scholar and his male colleagues encouraged others to take part in seminar sessions devoted to a historical and exegetical analysis of Schiller's poetry... It will not be long before a university that is inaccessible to female students will be regarded as a curiosity," wrote a correspondent for Warsaw's *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* from Wrocław. The journalist had exaggerated: most of the lecturers believed that a woman's place was in the home and that she should limit her interests to her husband and children. But five years later, Clara Immerwahr became the first woman at the university to be awarded a doctorate in chemistry.

She defended her thesis with the highest possible distinction, magna cum laude. She began her studies, of course, as an auditor, aged twenty-six, and had to sit exams that were not required of men. However, she proved so capable that she overcame all the obstacles. Unfortunately, she was only a woman, so she was offered nothing more than a post as a laboratory assistant in a private laboratory. The university authorities tried to keep Clara's achievements a secret, for fear that she would inspire other women to follow her. Eventually, she ran out of strength and support. She went down in history as the unhappy wife of Nobel laureate Fritz Haber, also a chemist.

She had hoped to work alongside him (this was not unheard of in the world of science, as evidenced by the marriage of Maria Skłodowska and Pierre Curie), but she was sent home. "I have always believed," Clara wrote in a letter to a friend, "that human life is only worthwhile when a person can make full use of all their abilities and experience everything that fate has to offer." She was unable to develop her talents. She took her own life, devastated by her husband's involvement in the production of poison gas during the First World War. He accused her of betraying her country; she accused him of betraying science. Clara Immerwahr is commemorated by a plaque mounted in the passageway leading from University Square to Grodzka Street.

5 Dr Edith Stein (1891–1942), Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, saint, patron saint of Europe

✉ Edith Stein's family home, 38 Nowowiejska Street



Portrait photo: © Edith Stein Archive Cologne. Location photo: Municipality of Wrocław.

Born into a Jewish family, she became a convert, a Discalced Carmelite, a saint and a martyr of the

Catholic Church. She died alongside her sister Rosa at Auschwitz-Birkenau. She is the first woman from Wrocław to be canonised. She was born here, spent her childhood here, completed her schooling here, came of age here and worked here. A philosopher and phenomenologist, she wrote and defended her doctoral thesis, *On the Problem of Empathy*, under Edmund Husserl. And although she moved to Göttingen in 1913, she returned to her hometown on numerous occasions. In her memoirs, she describes her walks across the University Bridge to the Victoria Girls' Grammar School, her strolls around Ostrów Tumski and Szczytnicki Park, and her visits to Ilgen's confectionery on what is now Kuźnica Street.

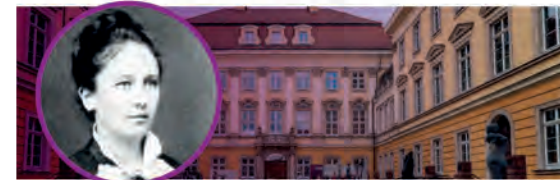
The house on Kohlenstrasse (now Dubois Street), where Edith Stein was born on 12 October 1891, no longer exists. However, the house at 38 Michaelisstrasse (Nowowiejska Street) has survived; Edith moved there as a nineteen-year-old and left it as a mature woman. For 23 years, it was a haven to which she was always happy to return. Years later, Edith Stein recalled the impression her family home had made on her favourite school friend, who had only visited her on the day of her A-levels. The pretext was to revise history – Julia Heimann lived in the south of the city and it took her an hour to get to the school, which was situated on what is now Poniatowskiego Street (it had previously been on what is now Bishop Nankier Square): "She scrutinised us thoroughly, and I have the impression that she came here not so much to save time as to finally see how I lived. She openly admitted her surprise that she had found such a beautiful house in such an unassuming neighbourhood. She was particularly impressed by the internal oak staircase and the drawing room where I received her." To this day, the tenement house stands out among the other buildings on the street. It remained in the Stein family's possession until 1939 and fortunately survived the 'Festung Breslau'; since 1995, the Edith Stein Society has owned it.

Near the house on Nowowiejska Street stands the Church of St Michael the Archangel, which Edith Stein attended every time she visited Wrocław from the moment of her baptism in 1922 (the street along which she walked to the church was renamed in her honour after 1989). A chapel has also been dedicated to her. It contains a marble altar in the shape of an open Bible, designed by Alfreda Poznańska. The altar was funded by the Archdiocese of Cologne. A relic has been placed within the altar: an urn containing soil and a handful of ashes from those murdered at Auschwitz-Birkenau. On the wall of the chapel hangs a painting by Sister Michaela, a Carmelite nun from Katowice, depicting Sister Teresa Benedicta against the backdrop of a menorah.

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6 Gertrud Staats (1859–1938), Silesian landscape painter

✉ Royal Palace, Painting Gallery, 35 Kazimierza Wielkiego Street



Portrait photo: City Museum of Wrocław. Location photo: Diego Grandi/Shutterstock.

Gertrud Staats was the most outstanding Silesian landscape painter of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. She gained fame at a time when women had little chance of pursuing an artistic career. Although the Royal School of Art and Applied Arts existed in Wrocław, it did not admit women. Gertrud's father, a wealthy merchant and city councillor, supported her by financing her private studies and artistic travels. She also studied in the studio of Adolf Dressler, a renowned landscape painter who often took his students on plein air trips to the Karkonosze Mountains. Her series of Karkonosze landscapes is a particularly interesting part of her portfolio. The Staats family lived in an elegant villa with a large garden in the south of the city (now Powstańców Śląskich Street) and a studio built specifically for Gertrud. "For us children, the studio was off-limits, and I've only been in there a few times in my whole life," recalled Hertha Gerlinger-Brandes, her great-niece.

"I do, however, remember well that large, high-ceilinged room, bright near the large north-facing window but quite dark towards the back. There were a few pieces of lovely old furniture standing there, and several old rugs lay on the floor. The walls and easels were covered with a multitude of paintings, and on the mantelpieces stood picturesque jugs and a whole host of other objects that had once caught my great-aunt's interest or which she had brought back as souvenirs from her travels. The air was heavy with the smell of oil paints, which I liked very much."

Gertrud's first successes came as early as the 1880s, and a decade later she had achieved great popularity. She won medals at exhibitions in London and Chicago; her works were acquired for public collections, whilst private collectors paid ever-higher prices.

Critics, however, sometimes wrote nonsense about the 'masculine strength and courage' with which the artist introduced the viewer to the mountain landscape; at other times, they emphasised her feminine sensitivity to the beauty of nature, colour, and scent. What matters, however, is that they took notice and praised her work. Her talent, determination and artistic success helped strengthen the case for opening art colleges to women. In 1902, Gertrud founded the Association of Silesian Women Artists, which was intended to support women artists – particularly by organising group exhibitions – and to defend their interests. After 1945, a large part of Gertrud Staats's body of work was lost or became difficult to access, but the City Museum of Wrocław holds some of her paintings. They can be viewed at the Royal Palace on Kazimierza Wielkiego Street. This is also the venue for the permanent exhibition *1,000 Years of Wrocław*, which includes artefacts associated with famous women from Wrocław.

7 Prof. Bogustawa Jeżowska-Trzebiatowska (1908–1991), physical chemist, the 'mother of rhenium'

✉ Faculty of Chemistry, University of Wrocław, 14 Joliot-Curie Street

Like Clara Immerwahr, she was the first woman to receive a doctorate from her university. She

earned this degree at the Lviv Polytechnic, and her decision to pursue an academic career was influenced by Maria Skłodowska-Curie. "During her trip to Poland, Maria Skłodowska visited Lviv. She gave a lecture at the Town Hall and met with young people. It was fascinating. The beauty of science, which allows for an ever-greater understanding of the world around us, began to prevail in my mind over my passion for the humanities and my love of the Polish language and literature," Professor Jeżowska-Trzebiatowska wrote years later in her memoirs.



Portrait photo: Faculty of Chemistry, University of Wrocław. Location photo: Faculty of Chemistry, University of Wrocław.

She was known as the 'mother of rhenium' because she was an outstanding researcher on this element. Together with her husband, Professor Włodzimierz Trzebiatowski, she formed a perfect partnership – there was undoubtedly a special bond between them, even though she worked at the University of Wrocław and he worked at the Wrocław University of Science and Technology and the Polish Academy of Sciences. The Jeżowska-Trzebiatowska school has produced outstanding chemists; it has trained nearly 80 PhD graduates, almost half of whom are now professors with sizeable groups of students and academic successors of their own. Together, they form a kind of chemical dynasty: Józef Ziółkowski, Piotr Sobota, Florian Pruchnik, Henryk Kozłowski, Walter Wojciechowski, Lechosław Latos-Grażyński, Julia and Adam Jezierski, and many others. She paved the way for them to make their mark not only in Polish science but internationally as well. She was ambitious; she sent her students on internships abroad and encouraged them to publish their work. She also made sure that chemistry in Wrocław had the laboratories and equipment it needed to flourish. She would sometimes tell her friends about her experiences during the war in Lviv. She was a soldier in the Home Army, ran a small explosives factory, and hid Dr Emil Tazsner – who would

Professor Stanisław Rosik, a medievalist from Wrocław, believes that the earliest form of the name Wrocław was most likely feminine – 'Wortislawa'. In other words, Wrocław is a woman. And although the feminine element of the name has faded, women have left a deep mark on this city. We are still learning to decipher these traces and are constantly surprised by Wrocław's fascinating femininity: its wisdom, resourcefulness, courage, and creativity.

For centuries, the women of Wrocław were virtually invisible, as their lives were confined to the private sphere. Their names are absent from monographs on the city, because until the early 20th century, women rarely had the opportunity to make their mark in politics or military history. Yet without them, Wrocław would never have achieved the success it did.

Among them were architects such as Krystyna Barska and Jadwiga Grabowska-Hawrylak; women who helped build Wrocław's academic community, such as Clara Immerwahr and Bogustawa Jeżowska-Trzebiatowska; businesswomen such as Augusta Stein, the mother of St Edith Stein; and women who made their way into the world of power, such as Paula Ollendorff. In a male-dominated world, they managed to establish a strong position, break social taboos, pursue an education despite being barred from university, and stand up to totalitarian regimes. Their biographies reflect the slow process of emancipation within a patriarchal society, and often also a hard-fought battle against prejudice. The female face of Wrocław is beautiful.



later become a professor of biochemistry – in it. For this, she was awarded the Righteous Among the Nations medal. A true iron lady. She had far more strength, and perhaps also more luck, than Clara Immerwahr; however, she knew her own worth and spoke of it openly. Professor Ziółkowski recalled that, during one conference, Jeżowska-Trzebiatowska was assigned a room with a young research assistant. “They think my crown will fall off. They do not know that my crown is sewn to my head,” she said. The University of Wrocław has awarded honorary doctorates to 170 people, but this honour has been bestowed upon women on only five occasions. The first was Professor Bogustawa Jeżowska-Trzebiatowska. The square in front of the Faculty of Chemistry at the University of Wrocław has been named after her. It is a popular spot for photographs, as it is home to Roman Pawelski’s sculpture *Atom*, and stands alongside one of the most interesting examples of post-war modernism – the Chemistry Auditorium, designed in 1971 by Krystyna and Marian Barski.

8 Prof. Hanna Hirszfeld (1884–1964), paediatrician

✉ Former paediatric hospital, now Wrocław University of Science and Technology, 24/25 Hoene-Wrońskiego Street



Portrait photo: from the archives of Dominique Belin and Urszula Glensk. Location photo: Municipality of Wrocław.

She studied medicine in Montpellier (at the time, it was the best medical school in Europe), then in Paris, and subsequently in Berlin. There, she married the highly promising scientist Ludwik Hirszfeld. During the First World War, she served as a military doctor in the Serbian army – together with her husband, she fought against an epidemic of typhoid fever. The Austro-Hungarian army had abandoned

situated above the main entrance, serves as a reminder of the site’s past.

9 Wanda Rutkiewicz (1943–1992), Himalayan mountaineer

✉ Mural, 4A Legionów Square



Portrait photo: The Andrzej Zawada memorial Polish Himalayan Mountaineering Foundation. Location photo: Municipality of Wrocław.

Wrocław marked the start of her journey to the top. Born in Plungianys (Lithuanian: Plungė), she grew up on the banks of the Oder. Her mother longed for Lithuania all her life, whilst Wanda, just two years after the war, began to make a home in the city as it was being rebuilt. She lived in Zacisze district, used to tend a goat in Szczynicki Park (she would tell an Austrian journalist that she was healthier than other people because she’d been brought up on goat’s milk), climbed onto the roof of a former German terraced house on Dickstein Street dressed as a fairy, and in time began climbing the crags in the Sokole Mountains near Jelenia Góra. “These are magnificent rock formations – vertical, overhanging – a meeting place for climbers from Wrocław and Jelenia Góra. And after my first climb, I realised that this was it. [...] And it was precisely these small, modest hills – for that is what I would call them – these small, modest granite crags that sparked a lifelong love,” she recalled. She climbed higher and higher and eventually became the first Pole to reach the summit of Mount Everest and the first woman to reach the summit of K2. One of the most outstanding female Himalayan climbers in history, she conquered eight of the fourteen eight-thousanders. Wanda Rutkiewicz went missing in May 1992 during a summit attempt on Kangchenjunga; her body was never found. Today, a marble bust of her stands in the Gallery of Famous Wrocław Residents at the Town Hall. She is also commemorated by a mural at 4A

Legionów Square, designed by Marta Frej and painted by the women of RedSheels to mark the centenary of women’s suffrage in Poland. It was inspired by a photograph taken in 1969 during Wanda Rutkiewicz’s expedition to the Pyrenees.

10 Natalia Lach-Lachowicz, Natalia LL (1937–2022), intermedia and conceptual artist

✉ The Four Domes Pavilion, 1 Wystawowa Street



Portrait photo: ZW Foundation. Location photo: Matyas Rehak/Shutterstock.

She spent her childhood in Żywiec and Bielsko-Biała. She came to Wrocław to study – she chose the State Higher School of Fine Arts and studied photography, graphic design, and painting. In 1964, she graduated and settled in Wrocław as an artist. At that time, the city was an important centre for avant-garde art. In 1970, a famous art symposium was held here, cited in art history textbooks and encyclopaedias as the first manifestation of conceptual art in Poland. The symposium participants were tasked with designing works for the urban space. Natalia Lach-Lachowicz, her husband Andrzej, and Zbigniew Długajca designed the *RELOP Optical Instruments Ensemble* – a set of huge tubes fitted with lenses to function as telescopes, kaleidoscopes and periscopes – which was intended to be installed in Wrocław’s Celina housing estate and allow the estate to be viewed in a different, surreal way. Unfortunately, the Pafawag company was unable to manufacture tubes of such a large diameter. This was merely a foretaste of her famous experiments, which were regarded as subversive, iconoclastic and even obscene. She worked in printmaking, performance art, video art, photography, and sculpture, and created installations. She was able to work with any material and under any conditions, however

unfavourable. Among her most recognisable works is the series of photographs and videos *Consumer Art*, which established her as a major figure in the feminist art movement. Natalia LL’s works are held in collections including those of the Frauenmuseum in Bonn, the International Center of Photography in New York, the Musée national d’Art moderne and the Centre Pompidou in Paris. In Wrocław, her works can be viewed at the Four Domes Pavilion.

11 Jadwiga Grabowska-Hawrylak (1920–2018), architect

✉ A complex of residential and commercial buildings, 4–20 Grunwaldzki Square and 15 Maria Curie-Skłodowska Street



Portrait photo: family archive. Location photo: Sergey Dzuba/Shutterstock.

She was the first woman in post-war Wrocław to be awarded a degree in architecture. She was involved in almost every stage of the reconstruction and creation of the new Wrocław – she ‘stitched together’ ruined historic houses, filled gaps in the building frontages, and designed housing estates and schools. Her works captured the collective imagination and became icons. The most iconic of these is undoubtedly Wrocław’s ‘Manhattan’. The preliminary design, prepared by Jadwiga Grabowska-Hawrylak and structural engineer Wojciech Święcicki, was approved in 1967, but residents did not see the famous ‘Hawrylaks’ – also known as ‘toilet blocks’ – until the 1970s. It was, in fact, the only vision of a metropolitan Wrocław that was ever realised.

Instead of the usual 11-storey blocks, six 16-storey high-rises were built, with retail and service pavilions situated between them and linked by a wide pedestrian platform. Jadwiga Grabowska-Hawrylak proposed constructing the point blocks from white concrete mixed with fine ‘Biała Marianna’ marble powder.

What is more, the concrete was intended to become overgrown with greenery, as the recesses between the oval screens and the actual windows were intended to contain planters filled with lush vegetation. The roofs of the low-rise service and retail pavilions were also intended to be covered in grass. By the standards of the Polish People’s Republic, this was a highly extravagant fusion of architecture and nature. “I used to go to the foundry where the finished parts were cast, and I saw my ideas melt away in the metal moulds set out in the open air. It was a dreadful factory; everything was grey,” recalled Jadwiga Grabowska-Hawrylak. She decided on her own to do away with the rooftop lawns. She suggested replacing them with ceramic tiles so that, when viewed from above, they would look just like the pavements. The change was accepted, but only on condition that they were laid on roofing felt and adhesive. It was not even possible to place any planters there. Firstly, the recesses had been made too shallow. Secondly, there were no planters to begin with. Despite this, ‘Manhattan’ became an icon of Wrocław, and years later the project was exhibited in a prestigious gallery in Manhattan, New York.

12 Dr Barbara Labuda, a democratic opposition activist during the Polish People’s Republic, honorary citizen of Wrocław

✉ Zajeżdźnia History Center, 184 Grabiszynska Street

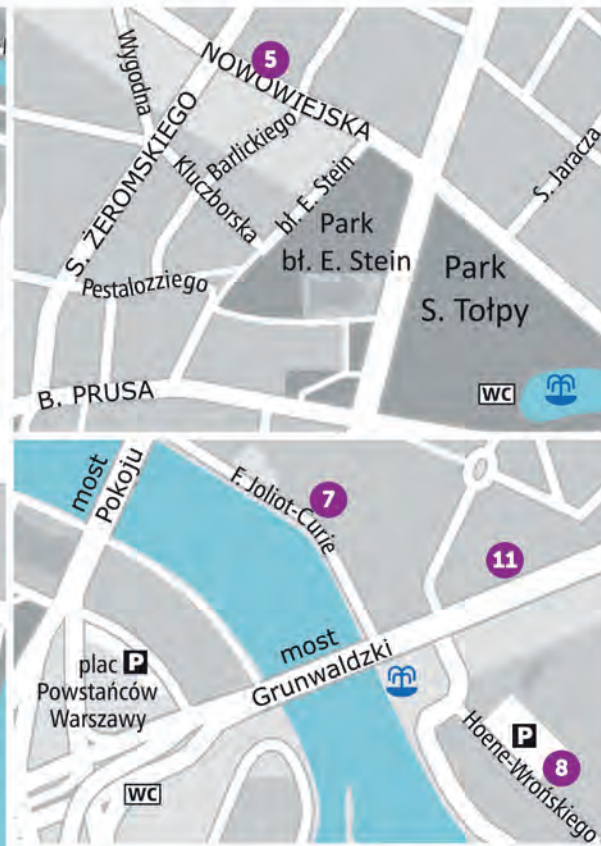
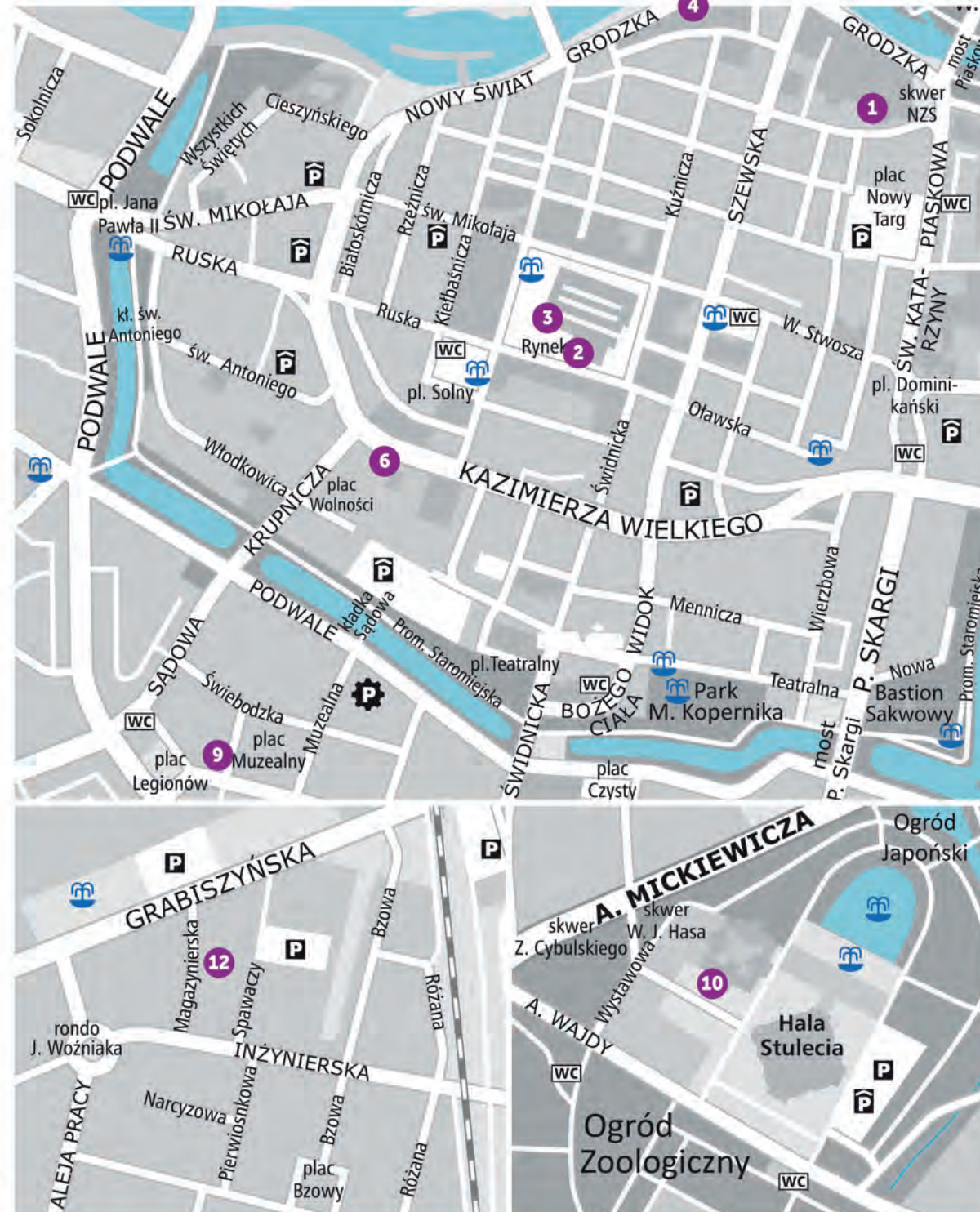


Portrait photo: Grzegorz Rajchert. Location photo: Paweł Wierchowski/Shutterstock.

She holds a PhD in Romance philology, was imprisoned for her opposition activities and went on to have a long career in diplomacy. With unwavering determination, she champions democracy and women’s rights.

In the 1970s, she worked with the Workers’ Defence Committee, and during the so-called ‘Solidarity Carnival’, she served as an adviser to the Inter-Enterprise Founding Committee and organised Poland’s first trade union ‘people’s university’, which was intended to set the record straight on everything that had been distorted or concealed. Following the declaration of martial law, Labuda took part in the ‘battle on the factory line’ – a strike at Wrocław’s largest workplaces, which began on 14 December 1981. Following the crackdown, she was forced to go into hiding (at the time she was a member of the Lower Silesia Regional Strike Committee and responsible for inter-regional liaison), but in October 1982 she was arrested and, after six months, sentenced to one and a half years’ imprisonment. She was released under an amnesty in July 1983 and continued to work whilst classified as an ‘enemy of the people’s government’. From 1987, she was a member and spokesperson for the Lower Silesia Regional Executive Committee, as well as editor-in-chief of the underground magazine *Region*. She kept her colleagues on a tight rein. When she arrived in Wrocław in 2000 for the opening of an exhibition on the underground press, two distinguished-looking gentlemen threw their arms round her neck, exclaiming that they would never forget meeting her. “Apparently, I once walked into a flat where they were printing and found them drunk. I said: ‘You’re off duty.’ I had a reputation as a ‘ferce shrew’ who would not let anyone drink. For me, safety considerations were the most important thing,” said Barbara Labuda, explaining this enthusiastic welcome. She was elected to the Sejm three times – first in the elections of 4 June 1989, in which she secured 84 per cent of the vote, the highest share among Wrocław’s ‘Lech’ team. During that memorable election campaign, she could often be seen beneath the famous clock on Świdnicka Street. It is the ‘clock in which the Spirit of the Times dwells’, a landmark whose hands seemed to mark moments of significance far beyond the city and which served as a meeting place for the people who changed Poland.

Text: Beata Maciejewska



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Emergency number ☎ 112

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