

Bronisława Giżycka

Etnografia

Podhale, Orawa, Spisz

1.

TITLE: Bronisława Giżycka / Ethnography. Podhale, Orava, Spisz

2.

Bronisława Giżycka was a wealthy landowner from Podole (now Ukraine). She used to visit Zakopane with her husband and children at the end of the 19th century for short stays, and from 1912 she settled here permanently. Enamoured with highlander culture, she undertook ethnographic fieldwork and built up an interesting collection of objects from Podhale, Orava and Spisz. She became involved with the Ethnographic Section of the Tatra Society, which had been established by Bronisław Piłsudski in 1911. She worked actively and conscientiously within the section when she was appointed by Piłsudski to the position of president during his stay abroad.

3.

Very little is known about Bronisława Giżycka. No portrait of her exists and the details of her ethnographic work in the Podhale region have, until now, been overshadowed by the achievements of Bronisław Piłsudski. She corresponded with him, regularly updating him on matters concerning the Ethnographic Section. The content and tone of their letters paint a picture of an extraordinary woman who was both kind-hearted and firm.

4.

She pursued the main objectives of the Ethnographic Section by documenting various aspects of Highland culture. While she was organising academic lectures in Zakopane, encouraging potential authors to write papers and serving as the Section's administrator for nearly two years, Piłsudski was expanding education in Western countries.

5.

She compiled numerous notes from her ethnographic fieldwork on annual and family rituals, folk medicine and beliefs, and superstitions. In 1912, she informed Piłsudski that she had recorded several hundred Highlander superstitions. In collaboration with Piłsudski, Kazimierz Tetmajer and Leopold Winnicki, she collected numerous song texts from the Podhale region.