



Kraków the Host City: Stories - Episode 8: Women in the Kraków hotel industry

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When writing about historical curiosities concerning the hotel business in Kraków, it is impossible not to mention about Franciszka Starzewska. She was a lawyer's widow who joined the ranks of Kraków's leading tenement house owners a few years before the outbreak of the World War I.

In 1906, she bought a new tenement house on Karmelicka Street, and between February 1909 and April 1910, she bought another five buildings: three in Kazimierz, and two three-storey tenements on Staszica and Radziwiłłowska Street. From 1883 to 1920, Starzewska also owned the Hotel Pod Różą (formerly known as the Hotel Ruski – Hotel de Russie) on 14 Floriańska Street. She raised the standard of this hotel by differentiating the room prices. She was the first to offer accommodation with breakfast, and the building had a restaurant and a ballroom. Among the guests who stayed there were the Russian Tsar Alexander I, Grand Duke Konstantin Romanov, Mirza Mohammed Reza-Qazvini – a Persian envoy to Napoleon, Franz Liszt, and Honoré de Balzac.

Ewelina Dobrzyńska ran a dairy, founded in 1877, in her own tenement house on Sławkowska Street. She allocated the ground floor of this house to serve as the dairy, which thus can be considered a prototype of milk bars. During summer, in the Jordan Park, she ran a seasonal dairy. Other owners of hotels in Kraków were Wanda Pollerowa, Lea Róża Teitelbaum, Bronisława Rump or Róża Pollakowa, who was even the owner of the building housing the Hotel Bristol on Matejki Square. Kazimiera, née Kotnowska, wife of the well-known social activist Eustachy Chronowski, bought a house on Świętego Jana Street (St. John's Street). Together they ran leased Saski Hotel, and then in 1886, based on French models, they established the Grand Hotel – we mentioned these hotels in our story's previous episode.

During World War I most of Krakow's accommodation facilities were occupied by the army and the development of tourism was halted. After regaining independence, the situation in the country was not favourable for the restoration of tourism due to the economic and organisational disruptions caused by the wartime. This was changed by the national campaign from the second half of the 1920s called Get to know your country, which brought about a revival of tourism in Kraków as well as elsewhere. Museums were quite popular among tourists, in particular the newly opened museum exhibition of the Wawel Royal Castle (about 55,000 people visited it in 1932, compared to 1,400 in 1918).

The interwar years in the hotel industry were marked by the return of hotels to their former glory. The first category included hotels such as: Francuski, Grand, Monopol, Pod Różą, Polonia, Pollera, Saski, Warszawski or Royal. It is interesting to note that in 1923 the Alliance Interationale de l'Hotellerie created the International Hotel Telegraph Code, which was also in force in our city. Guests could order accommodation telegraphically and the created codes avoided misunderstandings and confusion. Each message had to contain basic information: the number of rooms and beds, the day and time of arrival, the length of stay and the address of the reservationist. Thus, when booking '1 room with one bed for today, reservation for several days, I will arrive by noon', it would sound like: 'To - day alba stop matin'.

Before the outbreak of World War II, regulations related to tourism and hotel management were



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standardised. The first organisations, trade unions and schools educating hotel and catering staff were established at that time, but you will find out more about this in the story's next episode.

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