



Jagiellonian University: A Different View

A Different View is an all-new series presenting interesting information and trivia about the Jagiellonian University, discovered by searching through the university archives or stumbled upon in our everyday activities.

Jagiellonian University – the oldest Polish higher education institution, respected and esteemed, a symbol of Polish nation and science, an institution as integral to the history of Kraków as the Wawel Castle and St. Mary's Church. Almost every day, we unknowingly pass by places and people tied to the Jagiellonian University. For us, the university seems ageless and unchanging. However, if one decides to go off the beaten track and delve deep into the old archives in search of documents, photographs and pictures, one may discover a whole new image of the university: intriguing, fascinating, extraordinary. Such exploration is the purpose of the *A Different View* series.



Collegium Novum is probably the most frequently photographed building of the Jagiellonian University. Located on the site of the pulled down Jerusalem boarding house, this representative edifice is the current head office of the university. It was erected in 1887 and designed by Feliks Księżarski, whose other works include the Chapel of Blessed Bronislava at the foot of the Kościuszko Mound. Its Neo-Gothic façade has become an iconic symbol of the Jagiellonian University. The impressive avant-corps with the arms of the university and its founders and benefactors may only be admired from an angle, as the branchy Oak of Liberty prevents from observing it from the front.



And yet, the surrounding area looked very differently in the past. On an exceptional, colour photograph, taken sometime between 1910 and 1915 by Tadeusz Rząca, one can see lush, almost tropical foliage. Curiously, these exotic-looking plants were a common sight in the Planty Park in those years. We cannot judge if it is no longer

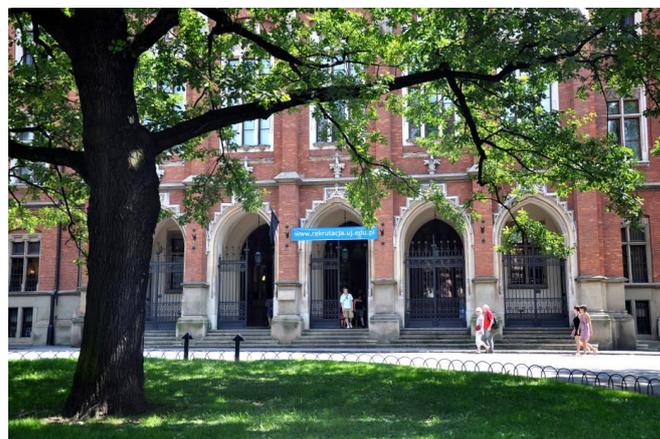
the case because of changes in climate or in preferences. Also worth mentioning are the ornamental lamps decorating the façade of Collegium Novum.

The Oak of Liberty was not planted in front of the building until 3 May 1919, when the university celebrated the first anniversary of Polish independence. Tree memorials have a long standing tradition in the European culture. The oak planted next to Collegium Novum is not the first in Poland to be planted to commemorate an important historical date. Another example of such custom is the elm planted in honour of the Constitution of May 3 1971 and located near ul. Szpitalna until World War II. According to legend, the tree was planted by Tadeusz Kościuszko, thereby symbolically establishing the Planty Park. Unfortunately, the elm did not survive the war – it was cut down by the German invaders.



Another picture, this time from the 1930s, shows the oak when it was still a sapling (barely visible near the left edge).

In the more recent times, the Oak of Liberty acquired even more significance, as in 2004 the university representatives buried among its roots the soil from death camps in which Jagiellonian University professors and students lost their lives in the time of World War II. Every year, during the annual academic procession and the University Remembrance Day, wreaths are laid underneath the tree in their honour.



Photographs (from top to bottom):

1. Collegium Novum under construction (1886), National Library, POLONA Digital Archive;
2. Collegium Novum by Tadeusz Rząca (1868–1928), photograph dated on 1910–1915, Museum of History of Photography;
3. Collegium Novum (1927), National Digital Archive;
4. Collegium Novum (modern) by Anna Wojnar.