

# Institute of National Remembrance

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## Materials from the collection of the Polish Falcons of America have arrived at the IPN Archive



On 19 January 2024, a shipment containing more archival and museum artifacts from the collection of the Polish Falcons of America arrived at the IPN Archive in Warsaw. The securing and transfer to the IPN's collection of documentation and artifacts presenting the over 135-year-long history of the Polish Falcons in the United States is the implementation of the provisions of the agreement concluded on 9 June 2019 between the Institute of National Remembrance and the Polish Falcons of America.

In the fall of 2023, IPN Archive employees prepared materials weighing nearly 2 tons for transport on 9 pallets. Among them, in addition to archival materials from PFA headquarters and from the Milwaukee nest, were also banners, uniforms, and medals, as well as falconry band drums, printing dies, sports cups and trophies, and bowling and gymnastic weights.

The Deputy President of the IPN, Prof. Karol Polejowski and IPN Archive Director Marzena Kruk spoke about the materials that have reached the IPN Archive during a briefing.

- This is a very important day for us, as more artifacts from the collection of the Polish Falcons of America have arrived. These are memorabilia collected for more than 100 years, which document the activities of the Polish exile in the United States, but also document the involvement of members of the Polish Falconry in the reconstruction and struggle for the independence of the Polish state during World War II, the cultivation of Polishness and love of Poland in the interwar and postwar periods. We are particularly proud that the authorities of the Polish Falcons of America have placed their trust in the Institute of National Remembrance, and as a result of many years of cooperation, this extremely meritorious organization has decided to donate its memorabilia to the Institute – Prof. Karol Polejowski pointed out.

Among the donated materials, mementos belonging to Polish activists, albums documenting their visits to Poland in the interwar period are particularly noteworthy.

As noted by Marzena Kruk, the Director of the IPN Archive, the donated materials show and prove that no matter where Poles live, they have Poland in their hearts and most of them never forget their homeland. The collection was donated to the IPN as part of the "Archive Full of Remembrance" project, which has been carried out for the last 6 years.

- When we created this project, we had in mind the archival materials which were being kept in the private homes both at home, and abroad. We knew that there is a great deal of these materials, considering how huge the losses Poland suffered in the area of documentary heritage during World War II were, how these materials, which should form the national archival resource, were destroyed during the communist period. We felt that these materials often help us fill in the gaps.

The Archive Full of Remembrance project already has more than 2,200 donors, which is proof of the trust in the Institute of National Remembrance, but also a commitment to ensure that these archival materials are properly secured, preserved, digitized, but most importantly, that the knowledge flowing from them is disseminated.- After all, this is why the Institute of National Remembrance and the Archive within it were created, to describe and present the history and struggles of Poles for a free and independent Poland- added Marzena Kruk.

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The first shipment of documentation and artifacts of the Polish Falcons of America, weighing 2 tons, arrived at the IPN Archive in November 2019. The materials bearing witness to more than a century of activity of this institution and its contribution to the struggle to regain independence consisted, among other things, of documents relating to the activities of the Polish Falcons of America, correspondence, newspapers, unique photographs, as well as uniforms, banners, and decorations, and documents related to prominent members of this organization: Teofil Starzyński (1878-1952) - colonel of the Polish Army, long-time president of the Falcons of America, and Agnieszka

Wisła (1887-1980) - independence activist, organizer of the recruitment campaign for the Polish Army in France and a nurse of the Polish White Cross.

Based on the collected documents, the IPN Archive has organized two exhibitions. The open-air exhibition " "Strengthen Your Arm – Serve Your Fatherland". The 135th anniversary of the Polish Falcons of America, which presents topics relating to the history of the "Falcons": the origins and organization, structure, split and unification, militarization, recruitment, armed action, support for the Fatherland, fighting in the Borderlands, the Falcons during World War II and the development of physical education. In 2022 and 2023, it was presented in 9 cities (including Warsaw, Warka, Zakopane, Cracow and Rzeszów).

W 2022 r. Archiwum IPN przygotowało również albumowe, dwujęzyczne, wydawnictwo „Ramię krzep – Ojczyźnie służ”. 135 rocznica powstania Sokolstwa Polskiego w Ameryce („Strengthen Your Arm – Serve Your Fatherland”. The 135th Anniversary of the Polish Falcons in America).

The museum exhibition under the same title includes nearly four hundred unique artifacts, including a letter from Helena Paderewska, chairwoman of the Polish White Cross (PBK) to Agnieszka Wisła, badges connected to the Falcons, numerous photographs or the "Memorial to the civilized nations of the world on Poland" given by the Union of Polish Falcons of America in early 1915 to the President of the United

States and all ambassadors residing in Washington. The display of original documents and artifacts are presented alongside interactive panels and multimedia projections, among them a fictionalized documentary made on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the recruitment of the Polish Army in France, carried out in the US and Canada during World War I.

In 2022. The IPN Archive also prepared a bilingual publication entitled „Strengthen Your Arm – Serve Your Fatherland”. The 135th Anniversary of the Polish Falcons in America).

The Polish Falcons in America is a social organization, founded by members of the Polish American community. The first Falcons group was established in 1887 as a youth-focused gymnastic society on Chicago’s near north side. At the same time many leaders of the fledging Polish immigrant community reached the US shores.

In 1894, several Chicago-based Falcons’ groups, or “Nests,” came together as the Polish Falcons Alliance and with a mission having national scope. Nests are divided into eight Districts. Throughout organization history, the Nest has been at the very center of PFA activities at the local level. A number of Nests maintain their own buildings and hold activities at their facilities. Other Nests, even though they may not have their own buildings, still organize activities for their members.

In 1912, the Falcons Alliance was re-established as a unified and fully independent organization with its National Headquarters in Pittsburgh,

PA.

As of 2019, the IPN Archive in Warsaw is the depository of a unique collection of nearly two tons of materials from Pittsburgh, showing the history of the Polish Falconry in America in the broader context of the history of the Polish diaspora and its prominent representatives.

Over the years, the Polish Falcons of America have responded to the greatest challenges and needs of the Fatherland – the regaining of Poland’s independence, the Polish-Bolshevik war, and the difficult situation of the country during both world wars. Important events and figures from Polish history have been entered into the history of the organization.

With the transfer of the Polish Falcons of America collection to the Archive of the Institute of National Remembrance repository, memorabilia inextricably linked to the history of our nation has been conveyed to Polish soil. This generous gift came to the Institute as part of the project – the Archive Full of Remembrance. Since its initiation in 2017, we have received nearly 1,800 acquisitions from private individuals into the IPN repository.

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