

Końskie

From the History of the Town of Końskie

The town of Końskie, with a population of nearly 20,000, is the seat of both the municipal and district (powiat) authorities. The earliest traces of settlement in the Końskie area date back to the 11th century, as evidenced by archaeological research conducted in 1925 at an early medieval burial site.

The name of the town probably originates from a horse-breeding center that once existed here. The oldest historical mention regarding the existence of Końskie is found in a document from 1145. The first owners of the Końskie estate were representatives of the prominent Odrowąż noble family, who founded the first stone church.

In the 17th century, Końskie and its surroundings became the property of the Małachowski family, who played a significant role in the political life of the country. The particularly rapid development of Końskie took place during the period when it was owned by Jan Małachowski, the Grand Chancellor of the Crown, who granted town privileges to Końskie and made it the center of his vast estates. In the mid-18th century, he also began the construction of his residence.

Located within the historic Old Polish Industrial Region, the town was a bustling hub of crafts and trade. Numerous facilities for smelting and processing iron ore operated in the area, evolved into blast furnaces, finery forges, rolling mills and other plants as technological progress advanced. Carriages and chaises were also produced here. An arms factory was established in Pomyków, and the production of armaments was of great importance during the period of reforms initiated by the Four-Year Sejm. The significance of the industry in the region was also recognized by King Stanisław August Poniatowski, who visited the Małachowski estate in 1787.

As a result of the Partitions and the fall of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Końskie entered a period of stagnation. Changes only came in the second half of the 19th century, when the debt-ridden Małachowski estate was purchased by Count Jan Tarnowski. An economic revival followed the construction of the railway line in 1885. The town's iron-founding traditions were continued and expanded, leading to the establishment of numerous plants and factories. The stone-cutting, ceramic, and chemical industries also developed during this time. The First World War and the subsequent post-war economic crisis caused a significant drop in the town's population. Despite these hardships, social and cultural life experienced a revival, and local education flourished.

During the years of the Nazi German occupation, the town and its surroundings were an active center of the resistance movement. As early as the autumn of 1939, a unit of the legendary Major Henryk Dobrzański, known as "Hubal", operated in the area, supported by the local residents. This was also where the Home Army (Armia Krajowa) units under Waldemar Mariusz Szwiec "Robot" and Antoni Heda "Szary" fought. The town's history is marked by daring armed operations by underground soldiers, such as the capture of the

town on the night of August 31 and September 1, 1943, and the raid on the local prison on June 5, 1944. The town paid a high price for its patriotic stance, suffering heavy human and material losses. Today, the heroic attitude of the soldiers is commemorated by the town residents and local government authorities during the annual “Konecki Wrzesień” ceremonies.

The contemporary history of Końskie reflects the history of the entire country. Until 1975, the town was the seat of a district (powiat) - a status that was restored in 1999. It continues to grow and develop thanks to the activities of numerous state institutions, private enterprises, financial bodies, healthcare providers, educational and cultural organizations. Among them operates our institution - The Public Library of the Town and Municipality of Końskie, which has borne the name of Cezary Chlebowski since 2014. In 2022, we celebrated the Centenary Jubilee of public libraries in the region.

The rich history of the town left behind many places worth visiting.

The most interesting attractions include:

- The Church of St. Nicholas (built between 1492 and 1520 and expanded at the beginning of the 20th century), a late-Gothic structure with Neo-Gothic alterations
- The Church of St. Anne and St. John the Baptist, located in the cemetery in the settlement known as “Browary”, founded around 1770 by Jan Faygel, Burgrave of Kraków
- The Palace and Park Complex, erected in the mid-18th century by Jan Małachowski, the Grand Chancellor of the Crown, and expanded by the Tarnowski family in the 19th century. The site includes a beautiful, vast park and stylized historic architectural monuments

Particularly noteworthy are:

- The palace wings
- The pavilions
- The Glorietta from the turn of the 19th century
- The Egyptian Orangery dating back to 1825
- The Greek Temple from the 19th century
- The Neoclassical gazebo from the second half of the 19th century
- The “Domek Wnuczątów” (Grandkid’s House) and defensive towers from the first half of the 19th century
- Shrines and houses in the town square from the 18th and 19th centuries with stone portals and gateways

Furthermore, there are valuable historical monuments located within the municipality:

- The Museum of the Old Polish Industrial Region, a former rolling mill and puddling works built between 1821 and 1842 (Sielpia Wielka)
- A former industrial settlement featuring a water-powered forge typical of 18th - century technology (Stara Kuźnica)
- The Bernardine Monastery and Parish Church built in 1694, rebuilt after a fire in 1802 (Kazanów)
- A fortified manor house, built around 1630, which remained in ruins for a long time and has been rebuilt to a structural shell (Modliszewice)

Translation Damian Szmidt