

The 19th century was a turbulent period in Polish history, being a time full of nationalist fever and the fight for independence. Many of the young Poles who took part in the fight, with their heads full of romantic ideas, were forced to flee after the unsuccessful uprising, and to find new places for themselves outside the borders of Poland.

The most popular destination of the time was France, where Poles were greeted with open arms. Many Poles also chose to start their new lives in the United States. There were a few people, however, who ended up in Scandinavia, and one of them became an important figure in the social and cultural life of Kristiania, currently Oslo, during the second half of the 19th century.

Ludwik Szaciński de Rawicz was born on 16th April 1844 in Suwałki¹ in the family of the Credit Association's local representative, Feliks (1815–1883), previously known as Szczęsny. His mother was Józefa from the Frydrych family (1821–1860)². Ludwik had ten siblings, although a few of them died at a young age.. He was the eldest son, but not the eldest child – his sister was 3 years older than him³.

¹ Ludwik Szaciński's Birth Certificate, Archiwum Państwowe w Suwałkach, ref. no. 1-60.

² G. Plutecka, J. Garztecki, *Fotografowie nietypowi*, Kraków 1987, p. 179.

³ Birth and Death Certificates located in Archiwum Państwowe w Suwałkach, F-0001-0026b, Opplandsarkivet avdeling Maihaugen, 2010.



Photograph 1. The Szaciński family in Suwalki. Ludwik is sitting on the floor.

The Szaciński family moved to Suwalki from Virbalis in Lithuania, which is currently located less than 20 kilometres from the Polish border⁴. In Suwalki, the Szacińskis first rented the house at 9 K. Hamerszmit Street, and later moved into the house at 24 Wesola Street⁵.



Photograph 2. A teenage Ludwik

⁴ Interview with Maria, Geir and Eli Kristin Szaciński, Digital collection in Opplandsarkivet, 2010.

⁵ A. Szyszko, *Odnaleziony dom*, [in:] *Tygodnik Suwalski*, no. 34/919, 26th August 2008.

Ludwik was sent to the Military Cadet School in Warsaw, where he stayed until the outbreak of the January Uprising in 1863. Together with many other young men, he fought for an independent Poland, but was forced to flee the country after the uprising failed. The occupants placed a death penalty on his head. During his escape from a Russian prison, he was wounded in the leg, forcing him to limp for the rest of his life. During the uprising, he was promoted to the position of Second Lieutenant in the Cavalry⁶.

The 19-year-old Szaciński wandered through Europe for a year. He probably visited Vienna, Paris and Switzerland, and it is believed that, at that time, he learnt the secrets of photography, which he would use in the future. Ludwik finally reached Stockholm, where he trained dogs in the Swedish-Norwegian Royal Court. After some time, together with his younger brother Kazimierz (1849–1887) and friends – Władysław Strutyński and Michał Wielgoławski, he moved on to Malmö, and later to Kristiania⁷. According to other sources, Szaciński and Strutyński were accompanied by another photographer, Miron B. Omenta⁸. They earned money along the way as travelling photographers, and carried all their belongings on a small cart. When they reached the capital of Norway, they were penniless and all of them had to start their lives from scratch⁹. At the beginning, they rented a flat together, but later went their separate ways¹⁰.

⁶ G. Plutecka, J. Garztecki, op. cit., p. 183.

⁷ K. Hosar, *Ludwig Szacinski – dødsomt polsk flyktning som ble norsk hoffotograf*, [in:] *Bildene dokumenterer! Norsk fotohistorisk Årbok 1981–82*, Oslo 1928, pages 51–53.

⁸ G. Plutecka, J. Garztecki, op.cit., p. 191.

⁹ R. Erlandsen, *Pass nu paa! Nu tar jeg fra Hullet!*, Milano 2000, p. 167.

¹⁰ S. Bonge, *Eldre norske fotografer*, Bergen 1980, pages 387, 391, 425.



Photograph 3. Wielgolawski, Szaciński and Strutyński on the way to Kristiania

When Ludwik Szaciński began his photographic career in Norway, the market was quite competitive as there were about twenty photographers working in Kristiania. However, due to his talent and social skills, he relatively quickly became one of the most respected and renowned photographers in the city¹¹.

Ludwik married Hulda Hansen, the beautiful daughter of a fisherman from Oslofjord, on 9th September 1871. This marriage was initially viewed as a mismatch, due to their different social backgrounds. Hulda, however, soon became acknowledged as an intelligent and resourceful lady. She immediately began to help her husband in his work and, after his death, ran the photographic studio alone. Right until the end, Szaciński called her the love of his life¹².

¹¹ P. Larsen, S. Lien, *Norsk fotohistorie*, Oslo 2007, p. 64.

¹² K. Hosar, op. cit., p. 59.



Photograph 4. Hulda Szacińska, Ludwik's wife

Ludwik's sister Józefa also lived with the Szacińskis for some time, but she suffered from homesickness and returned to Suwalki, where she opened her own photographic studio¹³. Ludwik's brother, Kazimierz, was also connected with photography and opened his own studio in Kristiania, only to leave the city soon afterwards. He stayed longer in Ålesund where, together with Henrik A. Stinessen, he founded the local Photography Association. Kazimierz died in Paris in 1887¹⁴.



Photograph 5. Józefa Szacińska, Ludwik's sister

Ludwik thanked his success not only to his photographic abilities, but above all to his

¹³ A. Szyszko, *Królewski fotograf z Suwałk*, [in:] *Tygodnik Suwalski*, no. 30/915, 29th July 2008.

¹⁴ Skorgevik, K., *Fotografer i Ålesund i glassplatenes tid*, Ålesund 1985, p. 117.

social skills. Szaciński was a member of many associations and organisations. He is credited with the idea of creating the Norwegian Photographic Association, which he later headed, as well as the Photographers' Trade Union, which he led for many years. He was also a member of the Norwegian masonic lodge, in which he received Level VIII (14th November 1893). From 1888, he held the official position of Royal Photographer. The Swedish king, queen, princes and princesses, as well as aristocrats, politicians, writers and artists all arrived at his studio to be photographed. The Shah of Persia also paid a visit to Szaciński's studio during his stay in Kristiania¹⁵. The Royal family trusted him to such an extent that he was chosen to photograph King Charles XV after his death.



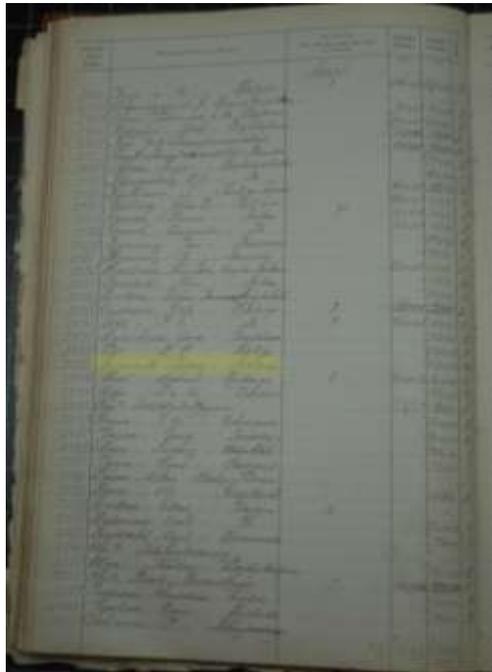
Photograph 6. The famous polar explorer, Roald Amundsen, also posed in Szaciński's studio

Szaciński didn't just photograph the cream of Swedish-Norwegian society. His subjects also included the sick and less beautiful, or those in the so-called natural poses, as well as buildings, streets and objects. As one of only a few photographers in Kristiania, he

¹⁵ K. Hosar, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

also produced, at the request of the police, portraits of prostitutes in custody¹⁶. Szaciński won many photographic awards, including ones in Paris, Vienna, Dresden, Philadelphia and Kristiania. Many Norwegian photographers also learnt their trade in his studio. These included his son, Stanisław, known as Stanni, who opened his own photographic works, first of all, in Tønsberg (1910), and later in Skien (1912)¹⁷.

Szaciński earned very well for the time, and not only when compared with other photographers. According to tax records, his income was three, or even four, times higher than other photographers in Kristiania, and comparable to the most prominent figures in the country¹⁸.



Photograph 7. Tax records from 1886, in which Szaciński's income is noted

From an early age, Ludwik was interested in hunting and fishing. He was a member of the Norwegian Angling Association and spent each free moment hunting with friends and hiking in the mountains, often taking his son along. He also bought a hunter's lodge with

¹⁶ P. Larsen, S. Lien, *op. cit.*, pages 77–78.

¹⁷ K. Hosar, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

¹⁸ Tax records for 1886, Oslo Riksarkivet.

some land and, together with his dogs, spent countless hours there.. His favourite prey when hunting were snipes and his friends from the Hunting Association jokingly called him “Sniper”¹⁹.



Photograph 8. Szaciński hunting with his son and friends

Ludwik was also known for his weakness towards occultism. His interest in spiritualism and hypnosis came from his family home, where his father and his friends often experimented with hypnosis. The occupying powers quickly outlawed this activity and those caught practising it were sent to Siberia. At one time, Szaciński became engaged in a public debate in one of the capital's newspapers with a professor who was regarded as an authority in this field²⁰.

Szaciński was regarded by his friends as a generally calm and peaceful person, who could also be violent during fits of anger²¹. In a conversation with Stanisław Przybyszewski, Ludwik himself admitted that he was not a happy man. Despite his career, friends, family, 30

¹⁹ K. Hosar, op. cit., pages 56–57.

²⁰ K. Hosar, op.cit., pages 57–58.

²¹ K. Hosar, op.cit., p. 58.

years spent in Norway, and the prestige surrounding his position, despite the citizenship received in 1882, he always felt like a foreigner, a refugee²². Because of his past, he couldn't visit his homeland, and was only able to meet his Polish family abroad. A longing for the country of his childhood poisoned his life²³.

In the summer of 1894, on 8th July, 30 years after leaving Poland, he committed suicide in a hunter's lodge on the island of Ormøya.

Szaciński was buried with great honour. During his funeral, many political, cultural and military figures spoke, and many members of the organisations to which he belonged participated in the large funeral procession²⁴. That is how he bade farewell to the country in which he came to live, but which he was unable to love.



Photograph 9. Funeral portrait of Ludwik Szaciński

After Ludwik's death, Hulda continued to run the studio. Due to renovation works,

²² S. Przybyszewski, *Moi współcześni wśród obcych*, Warszawa 1926, pages 201–204.

²³ *Interview with Maria, Geir and Eli Kristin Szaciński*, Digital collection in Opplandsarkivet, 2010.

²⁴ K. Hosar, op.cit., p. 58.

the studio moved along the street from number 4 to number 24 Karl Johansgate and continued to operate until 1914²⁵.

Over 100 years after Szaciński's death, his descendants still remember their famous ancestor. Despite his name being difficult for Norwegians to pronounce, his great-grandchildren still carry it with pride. They have visited Suwalki a few times with the hope of learning more about the Polish roots of their family, and perhaps even of finding a surviving member of their clan – a descendant of Ludwik's brothers and sisters. Unfortunately, their search has been in vain so far²⁶.



Photograph 10. Ludwik Szaciński's great-grandchildren. From the right: Maria, Geir and *Eli Kristin Szaciński*.

Here is a historical paradox – a member of the January Uprising, whose name is completely unknown in Poland, became one of the greatest Norwegian photographers.

²⁵ K. Hosar, op.cit., p. 59.

²⁶ *Interview with Maria, Geir and Eli Kristin Szaciński*, op.cit..

Photographs:

1. The Szaciński family in Suwalki. Ludwik sitting on the floor. Property of the Szaciński family.
2. A teenage Ludwik. Property of K. Hosar.
3. Wielgolawski, Szaciński and Strutyński on the road to Kristiania. Property of K. Hosar.
4. Hulda Szacińska, Ludwik's wife. Property of the Szaciński family.
5. Józefa Szacińska, Ludwik's sister. Property of the Szaciński family.
6. The famous polar explorer, Roald Amundsen, also posed in Szaciński's studio. Property of Oslo Bymuseum.
7. Tax records from 1886, including Szaciński's income. Property of Oslo Byarkiv.
8. Szaciński hunting with his son and friends. Property of the Szaciński family.
9. Funeral portrait of Ludwik Szaciński. Property of the Szaciński family.
10. Ludwik Szaciński's great-grandchildren. From the right: Maria, Geir and Eli Kristin Szaciński.

Bibliography:

1. S. Przybyszewski, *Moi współcześni wśród obcych*, Warszawa 1926.
2. P. Larsen, S. Lien, *Norsk fotohistorie*, Oslo 2007.
3. S. Bonge, *Eldre norske fotografer*, Bergen, 1980.
4. K. Hosar, *Ludwig Szaciński – dodsomt polske flyktning som ble norsk hoffotograf*, [in:] *Bildene dokumenterer! Norsk fotohistorisk Årbok 1981–82*.
5. R. Erlandsen, *Pass nu paa! Nu tar jeg fra Hullet!*, Milano 2000.
6. *Interview with Maria, Geir and Liv Szaciński*, Digital collection in Opplandsarkivet, 2010.
7. Ludwik Szaciński's Birth Certificate, Archiwum Państwowe w Suwałkach, ref. no. 1-60.
8. A. Szyszko, *Królemski fotograf z Suwałk*, [in:] *Tygodnik Suwalski*, no. 30/915, 29th July 2008.
9. A. Szyszko, *Odnaleziony dom*, [in:] *Tygodnik Suwalski*, no. 34/919, 26th August 2008.

10. Birth and Death Certificates located in Archiwum Państwowe w Suwałkach, F-0001-0026b, Opplandsarkivet avdeling Maihaugen, 2010.
11. G. Plutecka, J. Garztecki, *Fotografowie nietypowi*, Kraków 1987.
12. K. Skorgevik, *Fotografer i Ålesund i glassplatenes tid*, Ålesund 1985.
13. Tax records from 1886, Oslo Riksarkivet.