

## HOW DOCTOR WOLF VACCINATED SMALLPOX IN GDANSK

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Doctor Nathaniel Mateusz Wolf from Chojnice (1724—84) was a physician in ordinary for the Czartoryski and Lubomirski family, and a GP for the famous Knights School founded by Stanislaw August in Warsaw. He was very much appreciated by the king and was even made noble by him. Dr Wolf was a companion of prince Adam Czartoryski in his voyage to Turkey. On his returning to the country he settled in Tczew, and when the city became Prussian after the first partition, he moved to Gdansk, which was still Polish at that time. Here „he soon gathered a widespread practice, which did not, however, distract him from his many interests, such as astronomy and scientific experiments connected with medical knowledge”. Dr Wolf was the founder of a famous observatory on Biskupia Gorka, which was destroyed during the Napoleon wars. He was also a botanist, creator of an original taxonomy of plants. He made a present to the Gdansk Naturalist Society, giving them his herbarium with five thousand specimen and a rich collection of shells and minerals. Before the war Dr Wolf’s collection was a boast of the Natural Museum in the Green Gate.

Also in the field of medicine Wolf had great achievements introducing in Gdansk the first in Poland mass vaccination against smallpox. Johanna Schopenhauer gives a really entertaining description of such vaccination in her „Youth memories from Gdansk”. Here are some interesting fragments:

„...on that important day all the house was put on its head. Our parents, we — three unfortunate main characters (Johanna — Annie — ten years old at that time — and her two sisters), doctor Wolf, Mr Nixius our surgeon, Catherine, and our young housemaid Florentina, all that on an ugly April day was put into carriages and brought into the furthest part of the city, in the middle of a dirty hen-yard, in front of an old, poor-looking house. (...) And so we were sitting under the sky, poor little girls, shaking from fear and cold, among the cackle of geese and ducks, sniffed by very interested piglets. Dr Wolf inflicted each of us eight wounds with a golden needle dipped in smallpox matter, two on each hand, between the thumb and index finger, two on each knee. Adding to all that, we had to seat in front of all those people, with our knees naked, to let the venom dry. (...) It took such a long time

that it is difficult to imagine it nowadays. For each of the inflicted small wounds new smallpox matter had to be brought from people suffering from the disease, so Mr Nixius had to go up the fourth floor of the dilapidated building twenty four times! Florentina standing in the door took the needle from him, to avoid all danger and protect against every possibility of transferring a dangerous internal infection. She gave the needle to Catherine, standing a few steps away, and from her it was passed on to our mother who finally gave it to doctor Wolf”.

After returning home doctor did not let the young Trosieaner ladies rest: „games, walks, running from morning till evening, although with the strict diet which was prolonged duly we finally lost all our strength”. The same method was used when Johanna appeared to have some complications. In spite of temperature and rash „doctor Wolf picked me up, took on his hands and ran with me, be it hot or cold, rain or good weather, to and fro along the Long Bridge. Almost unconscious, I hanged as a lamb on his arm, and the people who met us only looked and expressed their sympathy loudly”.

The rigorous treatment ended successfully. Dr Wolf wrote a book about smallpox vaccination, and it passed from hand to hand. „The prejudice against smallpox vaccination was finally defeated, and doctor Wolf’s success appeared to be permanent”. Little Annie Trosiener grew up to be Johanna and married Floris Schopenhauer from Holy Ghost street. Their son, who was called Arthur because it is pronounced in the same way in all languages, let down his parents in their hopes, because instead of remaining in trade he become a great philosopher.

*Translation: Anna Kucharska*