WALENTYNOWICZ, ANNA


RELATED MEDIA:
Man of Iron (Polish film), directed by Andrzej Wajda.

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Wales, Nym (1907-1997).
See Snow, H elen Foster.

Wales, princess of.
See Eleanor of M ontfort (1252-1282).
See Joan of K ent (1328-1385).
See A nne of Warwick (1456-1485).
See Caroline of Ansbach (1683-1737).
See Augusta of Saxe-G ottha (1719-1772).
See Caroline of Brunswick (1768-1821).

See Caroline of Brunswick for sidebar on Charlotte Augusta (1796-1817).
See Alexandra of Denmark (1844-1925).
See Mary of Teck (1867-1953).
See Diana (1961-1997).

Wales, queen of.
See Edith (fl. 1063).
See Angharad (d. 1162).

Walewska, Maria (1786-1817)

Polish noblewoman who became the mistress of Napoleon Bonaparte in order to promote the restoration of independence to her country. Name variations: Maria Walenska; Maria Walewska; Countess Valeska. Pronunciation: Va-LEV-skah. Born M aria Laczynska in the Polish town of Brodno near her family’s estate of Kiernozna outside Warsaw on December 7, 1786; died in Paris, France, on December 11, 1817, of kidney disease complicated by a recent pregnancy; daughter of M atthew Laczynski and Eva Zaborowska Laczynska (members of the Polish nobility); educated by private tutors, and at the Convent of Our Lady of the Assumption in Warsaw, 1800-1803; married Anastase Colonna Walewski (a Polish noble, landowner, and former chamberlain to King Stanislaus Poniatowski of Poland), probably on June 17, 1804 (divorced 1812); married General Philippe Antoine O rmano (cousin to N apoleon), on September 7, 1815; children: (first marriage) Anthony Basil Rudolph; (second marriage) Rodolphe Auguste; (with N apoleon) Alexander Florian Joseph Colonna Walewski.

Death of her father in battle of Maciejowice against the Russians (1794); left family estate for schooling in Warsaw (1800); while French army occupied Warsaw, met Lieutenant Charles de Flahaut and worked in French military hospitals (1806); became Napoleon’s mistress, visited him at Finckenstein castle, and creation of Grand Duchy of Warsaw (1807); visited Paris (1808); fled from Warsaw to Thorn during Austrian invasion of Poland and joined Napoleon in Vienna and Paris (1809); after Napoleon married Archduchess Marie-Louise of Austria, moved permanently to Paris (1810); presented at French imperial court (1811); when Napoleon invaded Russia, returned to Warsaw (1812); returned to Paris (1813); visited Napoleon on Elba (1814); had two final meetings with Napoleon (1815).

Countess Maria Walewska stands in the midst of two momentous developments in European history at the start of the 19th century. Her native Poland had recently been removed from
that Napoleon's friendship, backed by French
arms, offered the best hope for a resurrected and
independent Poland. Marie's brother Benedict,
who had served for years in the French army,
added his voice to those urging her to accept
Napoleon's overtures. In the end, Marie relented.
As R.F. Delderfield has noted, "Had she been less
of a patriot it is extremely doubtful whether she
could have been persuaded to yield to the enor-
mous pressures put upon her by her fellow coun-
trymen." Despite her conservative family back-
ground and devotion to her Roman Catholic
religious beliefs, Marie agreed to see the French
emperor. In short order, she became his mistress.
The political situation into which Marie
now entered was a complex one. Napoleon
could see the advantage of sponsoring a revived
Polish kingdom with its population linked by
ties of gratitude to France. On the other hand,
promoting Polish independence meant a severe
strain on France's relationship to the Austrian
and Russian empires. In the end, Napoleon re-
fused to bend his political policies or to stray far
from his pursuit of gain even for Marie. But the
French dictator used the promise of his friend-
ship for Poland in wooing Marie. He noted in
one letter to her that "your country will be even
dearer to me if you have compassion on my
heart." Nonetheless, the two lovers soon went
beyond a mere physical relationship to a tie of
genuine affection. They had a rare chance for an
extended time together in the first months of
1807 as Napoleon resumed his war against the
Russians. Following a bloody stalemate at the
battle of Eylau on February 8, Napoleon retired
to his headquarters at the castle of Finckenstein
in East Prussia. Marie joined him there in April
while he planned the next stage in the campaign.
She now frankly accepted her role as
Napoleon's mistress, and they spent approxi-
mately two months together at Finckenstein. In
his memoirs written years later on St. Helena,
Napoleon recalled how his feelings for Marie
changed during this interlude. She ceased to be
merely a target of his sexual desires and stimu-
lated his deepest feelings of love and devotion.
In June, Napoleon's forces triumphed over the Rus-
sians at the battle of Friedland. In the ensuing
settlement Napoleon reached with Russia's Tsar
Alexander I, Russia kept most of its Polish lands.
Napoleon was willing only to carve out a small
Polish state; this newly formed Grand Duchy of
Warsaw now emerged as a French satellite. These
actions were a clear indication that Napoleon would not bend his ambitions to satis-
fy the desire of Poland's patriots. Marie's role as
an emissary for her nation had failed.

When the French leader returned to Paris,
Marie followed six months later in the spring of
1808. But her visit was brief. After his arrival
home, Napoleon renewed his continuous quest
for other sexual partners. He also immersed
himself in maintaining control over the Euro-
pean continent. France's invasion of Spain was
going badly, and he had to leave to deal person-
ally with the crisis. With her lover gone, Marie
felt no reason to remain and returned to Poland.
For the next year and a half, her only contact
with Napoleon came through letters.
The second major interlude they had toget-
ther came in 1809. The Austrian Empire,
Napoleon's most stubborn opponent among the
powers of Europe, went to war against France
once again in April of that year. Napoleon had a
difficult campaign in dealing with his old antag-
onist. Austrian troops even penetrated Poland,
forcing Marie and other pro-French aristocrats
to flee from Warsaw. The decisive French victory
over the Austrians came only in July 1809 at the
battle of Wagram. Marie then joined the victori-

Polish stamp
issued in 1970
in honor of
Marie
Walewska.
the map as an independent country, and patriot-ic Poles like Marie were searching for a way to restore the once powerful Polish state. Secondly, the European scene was dominated as never before by a single man: the French dictator, Napoleon Bonaparte. As Napoleon’s mistress starting in the eventful year of 1807, Marie shared his intimate life; she also apparently had an opportunity to make him personally receptive to the hopes of the Polish people.

Poland was the only major European country of the 18th century to be partitioned among its neighbors and to vanish as a sovereign state. Once the second largest country in Eastern Europe (after Russia) and the greatest power in the region, Poland had fallen into a political abyss. Its powerful nobility not only elected the country’s monarch, the nobility increasingly reduced the monarch and the entire central government to impotence.

Meanwhile, the growing strength of Poland’s ambitious and expanding neighbors—imperial Russia, the Austrian Empire, and the kingdom of Prussia—created a deadly danger to Polish independence. Each of the three possessed a relatively efficient centralized government and powerful military forces. In the course of the 18th-century rivalry among the three, Poland loomed large as a prize ripe for the taking. In the end, they compromised some of their differences by dividing Poland among themselves. Thus, starting in the 1770s, her three potent neighbors carved up Poland. There were three separate partitions: in 1772, 1793, and 1795. After the last one, Poland, although not the Polish people and their hopes, had ceased to exist.

By the time the third partition of Poland had taken place, Napoleon Bonaparte was a rising young general in the French army. Over the next decade, he took power as military dictator, and in 1804 he crowned himself as the French emperor. The following year, he launched a spectacular series of wars. Striking eastward, he began to defeat the very countries that had partitioned Poland: Austria and Russia were his victims at the battle of Austerlitz in 1805, Prussia was humiliated by the French the following year at the battle of Jena.

Napoleon claimed to be the heir of the French Revolution, and he offered the oppressed peoples of Europe relief from the evils of the old regime. Thus, by the time French armies began to penetrate Polish territory after Jena, Napoleon had become the center of hope for Polish patriots. Polish soldiers had fought as volunteers in the French army ever since the 1790s, and Polish leaders like Prince Joseph Poniatowski, the nephew of the last king, half hoped, half expected that Napoleon would be the godfather of a restored, independent Poland.

In his personal life, Napoleon had long been known for his relentless pursuit of attractive young women. His marriage to Josephine Beauharnais in 1796 was soon shaken, first by her infidelity, then by his. By the time he reached Poland in early 1807 and made the acquaintance of the beautiful young Countess Walewska, Napoleon was accustomed to having his way with most women who caught his eye.

The woman who stands as one of the greatest loves of Napoleon’s life was the daughter of an aristocratic Polish family. The Laczynski family could trace their noble lineage back at least three centuries, but their wealth had been severely diminished by Poland’s difficulties with its neighbors. Much of the family land was lost when Prussia shared in the 1772 partition. Thus, at the time of Marie’s birth in 1786, Poland was already shrinking. Her country’s last efforts to fend off her greedy neighbors made the young girl an orphan. In 1794, when she was only eight, her father died in the battle of Maciejowice fighting with a ragtag volunteer force defend-
ing Warsaw against the Russian army. She was raised by her mother on their diminished estate. The family fortunes went into further decline, since Eva Laczynska was unable to manage the remaining family lands successfully.

The young girl was educated by private tutors until just before she became 14. Then she left Kiernoza to complete her schooling at the Convent of Our Lady of the Assumption in Warsaw. Marie's biographer Christine Sutherland finds the roots of the young countess' patriotism in both her early years at Kiernoza and these teenage years in her nation's cultural center. At the family estate, her most important teacher was a young Frenchman named Nicholas Chopin, who would later father the great Polish composer of the 19th century. Nicholas had become a fervent Polish patriot after arriving in his adopted country, and he had fought in the same force of civilian volunteers as Marie's father. In addition to the patriotic lessons he taught her, Marie heard her new school friends in Warsaw speak glowingly about the restoration of Polish independence. By then, Napoleon had a prominent place on the European scene, and many of Marie's aristocratic schoolmates looked to him as Poland's savior.

Yet her sacrifice for Poland was to prove all in vain, so it was as well that she came to be genuinely attached to Bonaparte.

—Correlli Barnett

The young countess was a strikingly beautiful woman, with blonde hair, a milk-white complexion, and lovely, blue eyes. Her first love was the son of a Russian general. But in the end, she married a wealthy and elderly Polish noble from a nearby estate. There is some doubt about the date of the wedding, which may have occurred in 1803 but most likely took place in 1804. There is none about the disparity in their ages. She was at most only 18, while Anastase Walewski was in his late 60s. The marriage took place at the insistence of her mother, and Sutherland describes their wedding as one joining "the melancholy little bride, bereft of feeling, and the old gentleman, beaming with self-satisfaction."

The unlikely couple took up residence in the Polish countryside, and married life seemed to point Marie toward an uneventful, somber existence. Anastase Walewski had been an important figure in the Polish court before the country's independence was extinguished, but now he chose to spend much of his time in his rural retreat. The most important event in the early years of their marriage was the birth of a son in June 1805. Then, the world of European power politics intervened.

As Napoleon's conquests extended into Eastern Europe in the winter of 1806, Marie's life became intertwined with that of the French leader. Following the French victory over the Prussian army at Jena in October 1806, advance parties of French troops entered western Poland and occupied Warsaw. Napoleon soon followed.

Even before Napoleon's arrival Marie had an important contact with the French. The first troops to reach her husband's estate included the glamorous young officer Lieutenant Charles de Flahaut, illegitimate son of Count Talleyrand. A number of historians believe that Flahaut informed Talleyrand, then the French foreign minister and a proponent of a restored Poland, of the attractive young Polish aristocrat. These authorities suggest that Talleyrand saw to it that Napoleon met Marie. Thus, the emperor's sexual energies could be put in the service of Polish independence. In any case, along with other Polish noblewomen, Marie went to Warsaw to work in military hospitals in support of the French army. Her husband, now in his 70s and in poor health, openly expressed his jealousy as she moved into such activities that put her in contact with attractive young men.

Historians differ on how Napoleon and Marie first met. Some contend Marie first contacted her future lover in the small town of Brolnia as he made his way toward Warsaw in January 1807. Marie and a single companion supposedly accosted the leader of Napoleon's escort and successfully pleaded to meet the great man. Thus, the first encounter took no more than a moment, but the lovely young Polish noblewoman made a lasting impression.

Whether or not this initial meeting occurred, it is certain Napoleon met the striking Marie at the grand ball welcoming him to Warsaw on January 7, 1807. The attention he paid her there was obvious to Polish leaders who were also present. When Napoleon sent the young beauty two admiring notes and received no answer, he became even more fascinated by her. The French dictator was not accustomed to having his romantic initiatives ignored in this fashion.

From the early stages of their relationship, Polish politics entered upon the scene. The leaders of Napoleon's personal entourage contacted Prince Poniatowski, the leader of Poland's nationalist movement, to ask his help in getting Marie to receive the attentions of the French dictator. Polish leaders like Poniatowski were well aware
ous French leader at the Schönbrunn Palace outside Vienna. Their stay at Schönbrunn was the longest time the two had together. By September, Marie found that she was pregnant. She returned to Poland to have their child in May 1810, a boy whom she named Alexander.

By then, Napoleon's personal and political lives had led him to turn away from her. In order to gain a sense of respectability for his rule and to have a suitable and legitimate heir, the French dictator first divorced Josephine, his wife of 14 years' standing, then sought a second wife from the ranks of European royalty. He was unable to get the younger sister of Tsar Alexander I as his bride, and he then turned to the Habsburg rulers of Austria. In March 1810, he married the Habsburg princess *Marie Louise of Austria* (1791–1847), and, almost exactly one year later, she gave him a legitimate son. Ironically, Marie Walewska's pregnancy probably helped to convince him that Josephine's childlessness was not his fault. Thus, his Polish lover inadvertently pushed him into his divorce and remarriage.

Nonetheless, Napoleon made it clear that he wished Marie nearby. In late 1810, at his request, she settled in Paris with her young son. Napoleon provided her with a lavish residence in the city as well as a country retreat. It is uncertain whether he saw her and their child frequently, but Marie herself was presented at the imperial court in 1811.

Napoleon's reign over Europe faced its most dramatic crisis in 1812. His invasion of Russia brought disaster. The vast international army that he led into Russia was almost totally destroyed. It had been the foundation stone of his power, and now much of Europe rose up against him. Before leaving for Russia, Napoleon had made financial provisions to secure the future of Marie and Alexander. Shortly after his departure for the fateful campaign, Marie herself returned to Poland. Following her arrival home, she obtained a divorce from her husband on the grounds that she had been coerced in marrying the aged Polish nobleman.

Faced with calamity in Russia, Napoleon deserted the remnants of his defeated army. On his way back to France in December 1812, the French leader passed within a short distance of Marie's home. He considered visiting her, but he was quickly persuaded not to by his aides. They reminded him of the pressing danger to his political fortunes.

In 1813, as Marie watched from her home in Paris with her two children at her side, the disasters mounted up. Napoleon hurled newly raised armies into Central Europe but was defeated by a coalition of his enemies at the battle of Leipzig in October. Marie's health deteriorated as a result of the strain she experienced watching Napoleon's fortunes collapse. In the spring of the following year, France itself was invaded and Paris was occupied. Faced with exile, Napoleon attempted suicide. When Marie tried to see him at Fontainebleau in the aftermath of his attempt to end his life, she was unable to gain entrance to his room. The French leader left for Elba in April 1814. His new home, the political realm which he now ruled, was just a tiny island off the Italian coast.

At Elba, Marie and Napoleon had their last encounter. In September 1814, five months after the beginning of his exile, Napoleon greeted his Polish mistress and his four-year-old son, Alexander. Historians attribute a variety of motives to Marie's effort to meet him. One view holds that she wanted to remain with him as his mistress. A second possibility is that she had come to secure her financial future. As Delerfield notes, Walewska was no longer the romantic and patriotic young woman Napoleon remembered. Napoleon's financial arrangements to care for Marie and Alexander had not been carried out. Thus, "she had come to Elba to discuss money." A third possibility is that she used her financial needs as an excuse to see him and to plead her case to remain with him.

The meeting took place in an uncomfortable environment. Napoleon was trying desperately to get his Austrian wife and his legitimate son to join him on Elba. Thus, he made every effort to prevent news of Walewska's visit from becoming public. And he made sure it was a brief one. The two had a bittersweet family reunion, the one occasion when Napoleon was able to get to know the love child he and Marie had produced. After a stay of less than two days, mother and child were gone.

The lovers had their final meetings in 1815. Napoleon slipped away from his island prison in March of that year, landed in southern France, and marched triumphantly to Paris to retake power. His brief interlude of political success was shattered at the battle of Waterloo in June 1815. And in these dramatic and sad moments, Marie met the French leader two more times. The two saw each other just before Napoleon left for the Waterloo campaign, and he saw her and Alexander several days after his climactic defeat. At the second meeting, they spoke in private for an hour and had a final embrace.
The glamorous Polish noblewoman, still beautiful almost a decade after she had attracted Napoleon's eye, had a brief and tragic second marriage. Her first husband, the elderly count, died in January 1815. After Napoleon began his exile in the South Atlantic, Marie fell in love with General Philippe Ornano, a distinguished officer in the Napoleonic army whom she had known for several years. Ironically, he was also Napoleon's cousin. Their marriage produced Marie's third child, a son she named Rodolphe. By this time, however, she was in very fragile health. The strain of the pregnancy weakened her even further, and she died in Paris on December 11, 1817, scarcely two years after her wedding. According to her wishes, she was buried in Poland but her heart was removed and placed in a cemetery in France.

Marie Walewska's love affair with Napoleon failed to bring the political aims that the patriotic countess had sought. Poland remained divided and under foreign control until the aftermath of World War I. But the child produced by their relationship went on to a distinguished career. Alexander Walewski fought in Poland's rebellion of 1830 against Russian rule, became an officer in the French Foreign Legion, and rose to become French foreign minister under his cousin, Emperor Napoleon III. He died in 1868.

Marie's love affair illuminates important features of Napoleon's personality. Accounts of their moments together, whether at Finckenstein, Vienna, or, briefly, at Elba, show a Napoleon capable of great tenderness. For many of Napoleon's biographers, Marie and Josephine were the only women he ever loved. At the same time, his tie to her reflected his practical, even ruthless nature. The Poland she loved, and whose fortunes had first placed her in Napoleon's arms, found no help from her powerful friend.

SOURCES:

SUGGESTED READING:

RELATED MEDIA:
Conquest (112 min. film), starring Charles Boyer and Greta Garbo, directed by Clarence Brown, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1937.

Neil M. Heyman. Professor of History, San Diego State University, San Diego, California

Walford, Lucy (1845-1915)

Scottish novelist. Born Lucy Colquhoun on April 17, 1845, in Portobello, near Edinburgh, Scotland; died on May 11, 1915; daughter of John Colquhoun and Frances Sara (Fuller-Maitland) Colquhoun; educated at home by governesses; married Alfred Saunders Walford, in 1869 (died 1907); children: two sons and five daughters.

Selected writings: Mr. Smith: A Part of his Life (1874); Pauline (1877); Troublesome Daughters (1880); The Baby's Grandmother (1884); Cousins (1885); The History of a Week (1886); A Mere Child (1888); A Stiff-Necked Generation (1889); The Havoc of a Smile (1890); The Mischiefs of Monica (1892); A Pinch of Bubble (1895); Sir Patrick the Puddock (1899); A Dream's Fulfillment (1902); The Enlightenment of Olivia (1907); (autobiography) Recollections of a Scottish Novelist (1910); David and Jonathan on the Riviera (1914).

Lucy Walford was born in 1845 in Portobello, near Edinburgh, Scotland, and raised in a well-connected family. Her father John Colquhoun was an author, and her aunt was the novelist Catherine Sinclair. By the time she was seven, Walford was already an avid reader, and she later confessed that her first exposure to Jane Austen's work in 1868 influenced her immeasurably. After her marriage to Alfred Saunders Walford, she wrote secretly, contributing stories to Blackwood's Magazine and working on her first book, Mr. Smith: A Part of his Life. Her family voiced disapproval when the book was published in 1874, but it was a great success and earned her an audience with Queen Victoria. Walford went on to write 45 books and was particularly adept at light-hearted domestic comedy, as seen in her books Pauline (1877), The Baby's Grandmother (1884), Cousins (1885), The History of a Week (1886), A Mere Child (1888), A...
His parents the Prince and Princess of Wales, his sisters Princesses Maud and Victoria, his brother Prince George, his fiancée Princess Mary, her parents the Duke and Duchess of Teck, three physicians (Alan Reeve Manby, Francis Laking and William Broadbent) and three nurses were present. The Prince of Wales’s chaplain, Canon Frederick Harvey stood over Albert Victor reading prayers for the dying. The nation was shocked. Diana, Princess of Wales, photographed by Mario Testino in London for Vanity Fair. Diana, Princess of Wales (1 July 1961 – 31 August 1997) was an iconic figure of the late 20th Century. She epitomised feminine beauty and glamour. At the same time, she was admired for her ground-breaking charity work; in particular, her work with AIDS patients and supporting the campaign for banning landmines. Married to Prince Charles in 1981, she received the title of Her Royal Highness Princess Diana of Wales. She is the mother of Prince William and Prince Harry 2nd and 3rd in line to the throne respectively. With ten computer-controlled climate zones, the Princess of Wales Conservatory is a glassy labyrinth leading you through a series of fascinating ecosystems. In our zone dedicated to carnivorous plants, you’ll discover the conditions that helped predatory species like Venus flytraps (Dionaea muscipula) or pitcher plants (Nepenthes) evolve to swallow their prey in less than half a second. There’s a new surprise at every corner of this winding glasshouse.