

...the mine in Tarnowskie Góry (1788), the commissioning of a coke-fired blast furnace in Gliwice (1796), and the construction of a cast-iron bridge near Strzegom (1797). For a long time, until the second half of the 19th century, Silesia became the most important industrial region in Germany. Jan Filip Carosi (1744-1799), an Italian educated in mining geology in Saxony, permanently settled in Poland before 1777 and associated with Stanisław August, conducted extensive work as director of mining in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. First, in collaboration with the aforementioned Ferber and Stanisław Okraszewski (ca. 1744—ca. 24), he conducted geologic research in the years 1778-1780 on mineral deposits in the southwestern voivodeships, including: in the area of Olkusz and Miedziana Góra, and in the years 1780-1785 he led the salt search. The issue of mining also found reflection in Polish specialist literature. The aforementioned Krzysztof Kluk published the work "Ry kopalnych oso zwie zdatniejsze szukanie, poznanie i zażynie" (1781-1782), while (Szeł Osiński (1783-1802) published the book "Nauka o speciesukach i szukaniu ory irudy irznej, smelting it in blast furnaces and bloomeries..." (1782) and the fundamental work in the field of metallurgy: Oznaczenia polskie a fabrykach (Description of Polish factories) (1782), which is also an important historical document.

The Oginski and Royal or King's Canals

One of the most important initiatives undertaken in Poland in the second half of the 18th century were large-scale attempts to organize waterways—which still constituted the basic transport routes—and to connect them into a unified, nationwide water network. From the beginning of Stanisław August's reign, energetic efforts were made in this direction. The first step was to entrust the rivers to the care of the Crown Treasury Commission in 1764. On its behalf, special inspectors inspected the more important rivers, prepared their maps, and They described the conditions of rafting, including listing natural and artificial obstacles that needed to be removed. From their accounts, we know that—despite initiatives and parliamentary resolutions dating back to the Golden Age—most rivers were severely neglected in this regard. In 1785, for example, on the Bug and Wieprz Rivers, there were approximately 200 such obstacles in the form of dikes, weirs, and mills, while on the Nida River, 22 mills that prevented navigation had to be closed.

One of the inspectors of the Crown Treasury Commission was the aforementioned Czacki, author of hydrographic maps of the Nida and Dniester. Jan Ferdynand Nax (1736-1810), a native of Gdańsk, was a more prominent specialist in this field. In 1775, he presented the Permanent Council with a project to make the Pilica and Warta rivers navigable and connect them with a canal, as well as a long-term plan to create a unified water network of national river systems from Greater Poland to Samogitia. This was This initiative was extremely timely, as the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth—deprived of Pomerania in 1772—had to seek its own new port on the Baltic Sea in the region of Samogitia and Courland. Nax envisioned the construction of such a port. He also contemplated navigating the Bug, Narew, and Wieprz rivers, and digging a canal between the Bug and Słucza. Nax then conducted fieldwork and surveyed the Pilica and Warta valleys and designed the route of a canal to connect them. He submitted this project to the Permanent Council in 1776. Lacking adequate funds for its implementation, Nax attempted, unsuccessfully, to organize a joint-stock company for this purpose. Another of his projects, connecting the Warta and Bzura rivers through the Łęczycza marshes, met a similar fate. In 1781, Nax studied the navigability of the Dniester and mapped this river; in the process, he made observations regarding the distribution of natural resources, particularly salt, ores, and precious metals. In 1785, he prepared a map and drafted a regulation plan for the Nida River.

Not all contemporary endeavours in this area ended at the design stage. In 1765, the Vilnius Voivode—later Grand Hetman of Lithuania—Michał Kazimierz Ogiński (1728-1800), on the advice of Mateusz Butrymowicz (1745-1814), began construction of the Telechansky Canal, later renamed the Ogiński Canal, connecting the Neman and Dnieper river basins via the Shchara, Yasiołda, and Pripyat rivers. Work was interrupted by the formation of the Bar Confederation, which Ogiński joined. After the defeat, he was forced to emigrate, but returned after receiving amnesty in 1774 and resumed construction of the canal. In 1784, the new waterway was opened to navigation, with the first boat sailing from Kherson to Königsberg, carrying a cargo of approximately 70 tons. Construction of the canal was finally completed by the Russian authorities between 1799 and 1804. It was almost 53 kilometres long, 10 to 17 metres wide, and in places about 1.5 metres deep.

Ogiński also contributed to the creation of the Pinsk-Slonim and Pinsk-Volhynia land routes, partially covering the costs of their construction and providing timber from his forests and diggers. Butrymowicz built these roads. Drafting them through the Polesian marshes required the construction of kilometres-long dikes and the construction of numerous bridges.

The second important waterway connection created during this period was the Royal Canal, built at the initiative of Stanisław August by the Lithuanian Treasury Commission. It connected the Vistula and Dnieper river basins via the Mukhavets and Pina rivers, opening a route to the Black Sea for goods from central Poland. It also facilitated the import of agricultural surpluses from the fertile eastern regions, primarily Volhynia and Podolia, to the western regions of the state (previously, these had been transported in winter by sleigh). The canal was designed and built between 1775 and 1783 by the surveyor and hydraulicist Szulc, who had perfected his craft in Sweden. It was approximately 80 kilometres long, 21.5 metres wide, and approximately 1.5 metres deep. In 1784, 10 boats sailed through it to Warsaw and Gdańsk. Between 1785 and 1787, cargo traffic operated successfully. However, navigation conditions subsequently deteriorated due to silting by pollution carried by the Muchawiec River and low water levels. The canal required deepening, which the country's deteriorating financial situation prevented. From then on, it was used solely for floating timber.

These water investments were extremely important from an economic perspective. They connected three major river basins encompassing the territory of the then-Polish Republic. Building these canals was a considerable effort in a country on the verge of collapse and demonstrated the foresight of their initiators and creators. However, they were created too late to bring significant economic benefits. Moreover, they constituted only one important element in the recovery of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In practice, they were of little use, even in improving trade, due to the disastrous condition of most natural waterways, which the authorities were unable to remedy either financially or organizationally.

Photos of the Oginski Canal below:

Tablica 146.

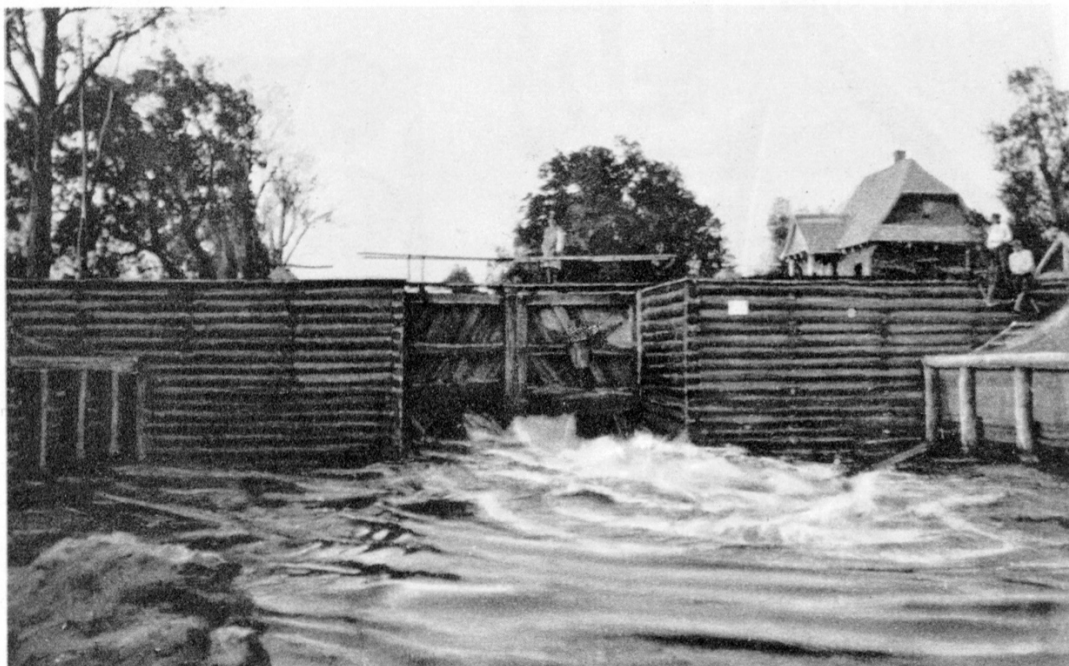


a. Śluza na kanale Ogińskiego od górnej głowy, przed odbudową.



b. Górna głowa i komora śluzy kanału Ogińskiego podczas odbudowy.

Tablica 147.



a. Odbudowana górna głowa śluzy kanału Ogińskiego.



b. Łódź motorowa pod mostem podnoszonym w śluzie.