

# Giants of Science

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## Wilhelmina Jaworowska

IWANOWSKA, Wilhelmina (September 2, 1905, Vilnius - May 16, 1999, Toruń), astronomer. Daughter of Jan and Konstancja Wasilewska.

She got her high school diploma in 1923 at the Gymnasium of the Sisters of Nazareth in Vilnius, then she studied mathematics at the Stefan Batory University, earning a master's degree in 1929 for her paper in the theory of analytical functions. At the end of her studies, she accepted W. Dziewulski's offer of employment at the university Astronomical Observatory under his management and on 1 January 1927 took a job as an assistant there; in 1928 she published her first astronomical paper. On October 1, 1930, she was appointed senior assistant. In March 1933, she defended her doctoral dissertation devoted to the study of the variability of Cepheid using the photographic method. From September 1934 to July 1935 she was on an internship at the Stockholm Observatory led by B. Lindblad, where she learned about new methods of astronomical spectroscopy. In 1937, at the Stefan Batory University in Vilnius, she presented her habilitation dissertation devoted to the spectral analysis of supergiants. In this way she obtained the degree of associate professor and started lectures at her alma mater. Spectrographic observations in Vilnius began at the end of 1938 after the inauguration in the observatory of a 45 cm reflector equipped with a spectrograph, but it was quickly interrupted by the outbreak of World War II. After its completion on July 14, 1945, together with a group of nearly 200 employees of the Stefan Batory University, she found herself in Toruń and took part in the organisation from scratch of the Nicolaus Copernicus University. On December 3, 1945 she began lectures on astrophysics; on May 22, 1946 she was given a chair and was appointed the first associate professor of astrophysics in Poland. She was nominated for a full professorship on August 24, 1948. In 1948-49 she

conducted research in American institutions: Yerkes Observatory, McDonald Observatory, and the Cleveland, Ohio Observatory. On the basis of the obtained material, she managed to demonstrate the existence of differences in the chemical composition of stars of different populations and in 1952 to distinguish two populations of RR Lyrae variable stars. On December 1, 1952 she became the head of the Group of Departments of Astronomy and Astrophysics and in 1969 of the Astronomy Institute of the Nicolaus Copernicus University. She was the initiator of radio astronomy research in Toruń. From 1956 until her retirement in 1976, she also headed the Toruń Astrophysics Laboratory, operating within the Astronomy Department of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

W. Iwanowska: *Mój życiorys naukowy*, KHNiT 1981, vol. 26, z. 2; W. Dziwulski: *History of the Astronomical Observatory of the University of S. Batory in Vilnius (1919-1939)*, SMDNP Series C 1959, z. 2; A. Woszczyk: *Wilhelmina Iwanowska 1905-1999*, [in:] *Profiles of Polish Astronomers of the 20th Century*, ed. A. Woszczyk, Toruń 2008, pp. 62-67.

Jarosław Włodarczyk

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