

LITTLE KNOWN KRAKÓW PHOTOGRAPHS ATTRIBUTED TO FATHER LEOPOLD TEXTORIS (1822–1885)

Father Leopold Textoris was born in 1822 in the Kraków district of Prokocim, in a family of Hungarian descent. After his studies at the seminary in Tarnów, interrupted by expulsion for participating in an anti-government conspiracy, he moved to Kraków, where he ran an institution for orphaned boys, and then (until 1865) a female school of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Virgin Mary. There were rumours that he had fought in the January Uprising. In 1867 he became a parish priest in Kołaczyce, where he remained until his death in 1885. He remained in the memory of the inhabitants thanks to his wide-ranging activities, not only pastoral. He taught at the local school, he was a painter and he dabbled in scientific experiments (he invented a fire detector). In addition, as a long-time member of the Physiographic Commission of the Kraków Learned Society, he conducted meteorological observations in Kołaczyce.

Two sets of photographs are associated with Textoris. One, bequeathed by Aleksander Czołowski, survived at the National Library of Poland. It includes five prints, four of which depict views of Kraków: a three-part panorama of the city from Krzemionki and Szpitalna Street. The second set, kept in the Print Room in the Scientific Library of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences and Polish Academy of Sciences in Cracow, consists of thirty-one prints in the stereoscopic technique; they show mainly Kraków, but also Kołaczyce and Rzepiennik Biskupi. Textoris' scientific and artistic interests suggest that at least some of these photographs were taken by himself. Should this hypothesis be true, he would be one of the few known amateur photographers operating in Poland in the 1850s-60s. The prints from the National Library's collection undoubtedly belong to the oldest photographic views of Kraków.