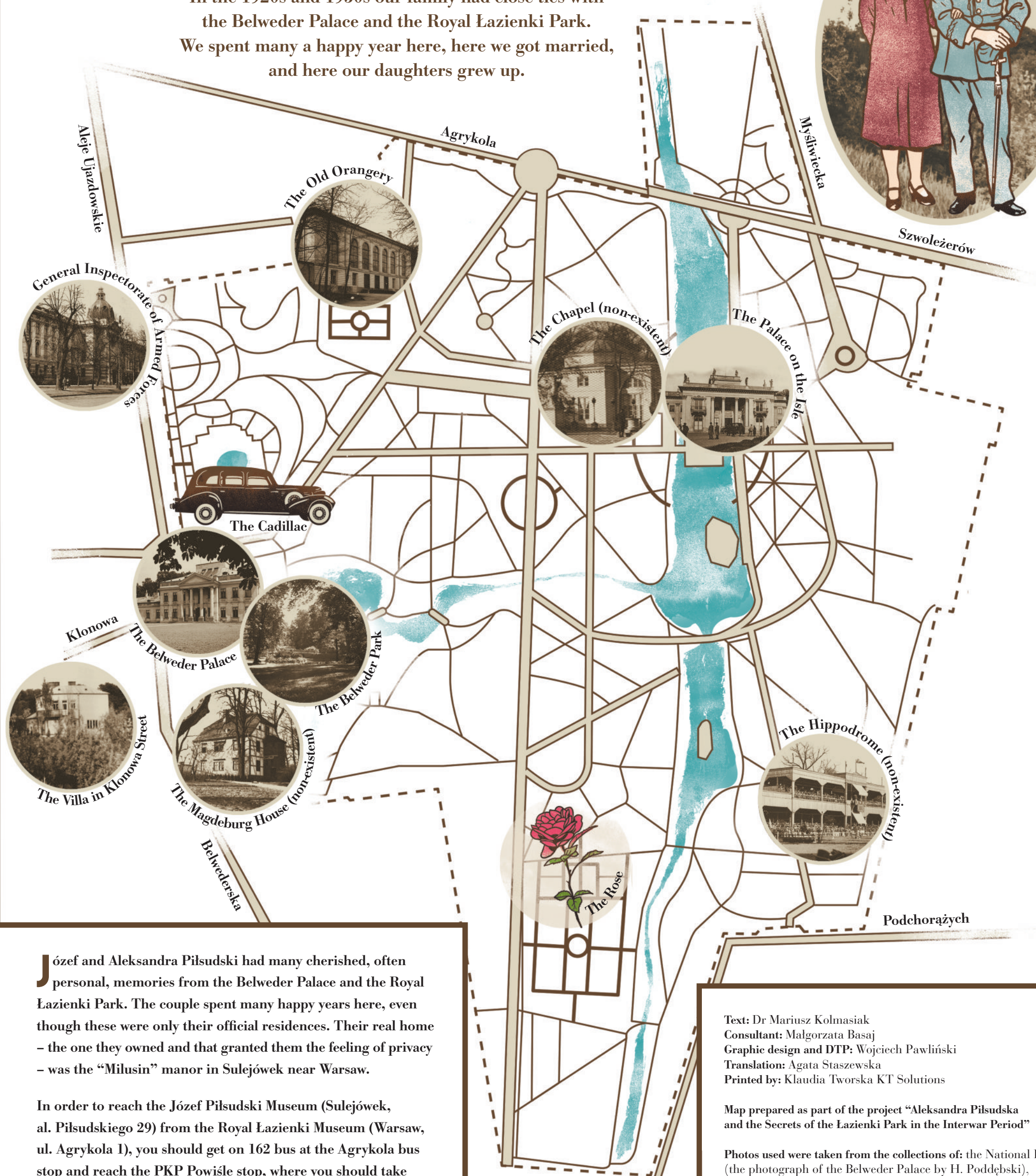


# AROUND THE ŁAZIENKI PARK WITH THE PIŁSUDSKIS

In the 1920s and 1930s our family had close ties with the Belweder Palace and the Royal Łazienki Park. We spent many a happy year here, here we got married, and here our daughters grew up.



Józef and Aleksandra Piłsudski had many cherished, often personal, memories from the Belweder Palace and the Royal Łazienki Park. The couple spent many happy years here, even though these were only their official residences. Their real home – the one they owned and that granted them the feeling of privacy – was the “Milusin” manor in Sulejówek near Warsaw.

In order to reach the Józef Piłsudski Museum (Sulejówek, al. Piłsudskiego 29) from the Royal Łazienki Museum (Warsaw, ul. Agrykola 1), you should get on 162 bus at the Agrykola bus stop and reach the PKP Powiśle stop, where you should take a Szybka Kolej Miejska S2 train or a Koleje Mazowieckie train to Sulejówek station. After some 10-15 minutes' walk you'll reach your destination. To get to the Łazienki Museum from Sulejówek you should take the same route, but in the opposite direction.

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Printed by: Klaudia Tworska KT Solutions

Map prepared as part of the project “Aleksandra Piłsudska and the Secrets of the Łazienki Park in the Interwar Period”

Photos used were taken from the collections of: the National Library (the photograph of the Belweder Palace by H. Poddębki), the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences (the Old Orangery by J. Klos), the National Digital Archives (the Magdeburg House, the Hippodrome, the Belweder Park, and the General Inspectorate of Armed Forces), and from the private collection of Dr Mariusz Kolmasiak (the Chapel by F. Gazda, the Palace on the Isle, the villa in Klonowa street).

Organizer



Partner



Józef Piłsudski  
Museum  
in Sulejówek

Financed by the Ministry of Culture, National Heritage and Sport of the Republic of Poland  
as part of the Multi-annual Programme NIEPODLEGŁA 2017–2022



Ministry of  
Culture  
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and Sport  
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## THE MAGDEBURG HOUSE

**JÓZEF:** In the park, there was a wooden, two-storey pavilion from the Magdeburg Citadel, where I was imprisoned from 1917. And that’s actually where I came back from in November 1918, when Poland regained its independence. Our firstborn daughter, Wandzia, was born at the time, of which I learned from Ola’s letter. It wasn’t an easy period, but knowing Ola and our daughter were waiting for me helped me endure.

**ALEKSANDRA:** In 1937, Magdeburg authorities presented the building to Poland, and one year later it was taken apart and transported to Warsaw. It was I who decided it should stand in the Belweder Park, although the Citadel was also taken into consideration. The pavilion survived the war, but unfortunately after 1945 it was demolished by the Communist authorities.

## THE BELWEDER PALACE

**JÓZEF:** I moved into the Belweder Palace on 29 November 1918 and for the next four years it remained my main residence. Here I lived, worked, met with diplomats and military officials, and finally, from here I waged the war on Bolshevik Russia. At first, I lived alone. Ola and our little ladies, Wandzia and Jagódka, moved to the Palace after our wedding, that is in October 1921. We remained here until December the next year.

**ALEKSANDRA:** In June 1926, after the May Coup, we moved back to the Belweder Palace, and I wasn’t particularly happy about that. I didn’t like the place, thinking it looked more like a museum than a residential building. Back then, Ziuk (that’s one of my husband’s nicknames) served as Prime Minister for a time, and later as the Minister for Military Affairs in all post-coup governments.

I, on the other hand, did some pro bono work, for instance in the “Military Family” Association established in 1925, of which I was made an honorary chairwoman. I founded schools and preschools in Warsaw. Such “Military Family” establishments were also founded in the Belweder. At first, they were attended by our daughters and children from our closest circle, but soon they began to accept all children from military families in our area. Their laughter, of which my husband was so fond, could be heard all around the Belweder.

## THE BELWEDER PARK

**ALEKSANDRA:** Children could also play in the Belweder Park, which back then was only open to Belweder tenants. Only in 1936 was it made part of the Royal Łazienki Park. Ziuk forbade to cut anything down in the park, so it became overgrown and wild. Our girls played there with children from preschools and schools of the “Military Family”. In summer, they passed their time in a little boat on the pond, and in winter they skated on the ice or sledged from nearby hills.

## THE PALACE ON THE ISLE

**JÓZEF:** Between 1918 and 1922 I was assigned, as the head of the State, several representative residences, including the Royal Łazienki. As the Chief of the State, I hosted many respectable guests here, accepted New Year’s wishes, and organized small military celebrations.

**ALEKSANDRA:** After marrying Ziuk, I became a first lady of sorts, and so the hostess in the Royal Łazienki. Before my eyes, the Palace on the Isle and the White Pavilion underwent major transformation. Insofar as during the initial period of my husband’s tenure they stood terribly empty, then at the turn of 1921 and 1922 the furniture evacuated by tsarist officials during the Great War was returned from Russia. The interiors were again full of works of arts and as such became representative areas, where my husband could perform his official duties.

## THE CHAPEL

**JÓZEF:** I have some fond memories of the chapel added to the western pavilion of the Palace on the Isle, where we got married on 25 October 1921. Thus Ola formally became my wife. The wedding was officiated by my chaplain rev. Marian Tokarzewski.

**ALEKSANDRA:** For me, another fond memory in relation to the Royal Łazienki chapel were the first communions of our daughters and other children from the “Military Family” schools. I participated in the celebrations and afterwards invited children with their mothers for breakfast at the Belweder.

## THE HIPPODROME

**JÓZEF:** In 1927, the wooden Hippodrome was built in the Royal Łazienki Park. In the following years, it hosted international competitions I liked to watch from up high the honorary tribune. During the competitions, on one day the jockeys competed for a prize of my name. Sometimes I was accompanied to the Hippodrome by my little ladies, Wandzia and Jagódka, so the visits became nice, family trips.

## THE OLD ORANGERY

**JÓZEF:** I liked theatre, as well as opera and singing. Because of that, I regularly visited the Royal Theatre in the Old Orangery, sometimes accompanied by Ola and our daughters.

**ALEKSANDRA:** For our visits to the Łazienki theatre, we had the royal box prepared for us, which was a nice emphasis of Ziuk’s merits, but also his current role in Poland.

## THE GENERAL INSPECTORATE OF ARMED FORCES (CURRENTLY THE CHANCELLERY OF THE PRIME MINISTER OF POLAND)

**JÓZEF:** In the years following the May Coup, I lived for a time in the neighbouring building in Aleje Jerozolimskie which became my residence as the General Inspector of Armed Forces. From there I supervised the Polish Army, and so I had an office in the building. Often, I stayed there several days, or even weeks. I could feel at home, because Ola had home meals from our cook Adelcia delivered to me by trusted gendarmes. Sometimes she visited me taking our girls along. Later it became my refuge, where I went from the Belweder, not wanting to bring the atmosphere of illness to my home.

## THE CADILLAC

**ALEKSANDRA:** Another thing related to my husband’s illness was the Cadillac, ordered from the United States in 1934 with specially lowered step, so that it would allow for easier entering. However, Ziuk sat in it only once. He said they were preparing a coffin for him, and never used it. I, on the other hand, used the car for almost two years after my husband’s death in the Belweder on 12 May 1935.

## THE VILLA IN KLONOWA STREET

**ALEKSANDRA:** After Ziuk’s death my daughters and I moved out from the Belweder. I was offered to stay, to tell the truth, but we were organizing a museum dedicated to my husband in the palace. So we moved in to a small villa in the military neighbourhood close to the palace. The large building separating it from the streets Belwederska and Klonowa provided us with some privacy. I have only fond memories of this house, cosy and comfortable, surrounded by large fruit trees. However, our happy life ended in September 1939, when Germany invaded Poland and we had to evacuate to Great Britain.

## THE ROSE

Aleksandra Pilsudska could never return to Poland and remained in exile for the rest of her life. However, the geopolitical transformation made it possible for her ashes to be brought to the Powązki cemetery and for the memory of this extraordinary woman to be restored, as she was not only wife of Józef Pilsudski, but also a distinguished fighter for independence and a social activist. The “Military Family” Association cultivates the memory of its honorary chairwoman. In 2021, together with the Royal Łazienki Museum, it gave the name “Marszałkowa Aleksandra Pilsudska” to the variety of the rose growing here.