



Stella Walsh (Stanisława Walasiewicz)

Topic Guide for Chronicling America (<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>)

Introduction

Stanisława Walasiewicz (1911-1980), a Polish-American athlete, was born in Wierzchnowiz (now Brodnica County), Congress Poland, and immigrated to Cleveland, Ohio, at age ten. Called Stasia by her family, her name was Americanized to Stella Walsh. Walsh began running while at South and Notre Dame high schools in Cleveland, and joined Sokół, a Polish sport and patriotic organization. She competed in the 1932 and 1936 Olympics for Poland, not having yet become an American citizen. In 1947, Walsh gained her American citizenship and was briefly married to boxer Neil (Harry) Olson; she would continue to use Walsh-Olson as her name even after their split. Walsh-Olson was active in the athletic community in Cleveland throughout the rest of her life, coaching the Polish Falcons track club and creating awards for Polish-American athletes. In 1980, Walsh-Olson was killed during an attempted robbery in a Cleveland parking lot. After her death it was discovered that she was intersex; this is often included as one of the reasons the International Olympic Committee has dropped gender determination tests.

Important Dates

- April 3, 1911: Stanisława Walasiewicz is born in Wierzchnowia (now Brodnica County), Congress Poland (a sovereign state of the Russian part of Poland).
- 1921: Walasiewicz follows her family to the United States.
- 1926: Walsh ties the women's record of 6 seconds for the 50-yard dash.
- 1930: Walsh originally plans to represent the United States in the Olympics, but decides to compete for Poland instead in both 1932 and 1936.
- 1947: Walsh becomes a United States citizen and is briefly married to boxer Neil Olson.
- 1951: Walsh-Olson wins her last American national track and field title.
- 1967: Walsh-Olson wins a 60-yard dash in 7.7 seconds, not even half a second slower than her 1934 world record.
- 1975: Walsh-Olson is inducted into the U.S. Track and Field Hall of Fame. The previous year she was inducted into the National Polish-American Sports Hall of Fame.
- December 4, 1980: Walsh is shot to death in a Cleveland parking lot during an attempted robbery.

Suggested Search Strategies

- Try the following terms in combination (as an "all" word search), proximity or as phrases: Stella Walsh, Stanisława Walasiewicz, Olympics.
- Limit your search by date for the run of her career and for specific Olympic years.
- Search newspapers in all states, not just Ohio.

Sample Articles from Chronicling America

- "[Co Słychać Na Polonji?](#)" *Jedność Polek* (Cleveland, OH), September 18, 1928, Image 4, col. 5.
- "[Drobiazgi z Tygodnia](#)" *Jedność Polek* (Cleveland, OH), September 3, 1929, Image 1, col. 8.
- "[Z Tygodnia](#)" *Jedność Polek* (Cleveland, OH), March 4, 1930, Image 1, col. 1.
- "[Co Słychać Na Polonji?](#)" *Jedność Polek* (Cleveland, OH), August 25, 1931, Image 4, col. 2.
- "[Stella Sets Record](#)" *Midland Journal* (Rising Sun, MD), May 11, 1934, Image 7, col. 3.