Marie Curie
1867-1939
Biography

She was a physicist and chemist of Polish upbringing and, subsequently, French citizenship. She was a pioneer in the field of radioactivity, the only person honored with Nobel Prizes in two different sciences, and the first female professor at the University of Paris.

She was born Maria Skłodowska in Warsaw, Vistula Country, Russian Empire, and lived there until she was 24. In 1891 she followed her elder sister Bronisława to study in Paris, where she obtained her higher degrees and conducted her subsequent scientific work. She founded the Institutes in Paris and Warsaw. Her husband was also a Nobel laureate, as were her daughter and son-in-law.

Her achievements include the creation of a theory of radioactivity (a term coined by her), techniques for isolating radioactive isotopes, and the discovery of two new elements, radium and polonium. It was also under her personal direction that the world's first studies were conducted into the treatment of neoplasms ("cancers"), using radioactive isotopes.

While an actively loyal French citizen, she never lost her sense of Polish identity. She named the first new chemical element that she discovered (1898) "polonium" for her native country, and in 1932 she founded the Radium Institute in her home town Warsaw, headed by her physician-sister Bronisława.