Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 29/11/2026 10:53:17

DOI:10.17951/sb.2019.13.41-54
Studia Białorutenistyczne 13/2019 HISTORY, CULTURE AND SOCIOLOGY

Mariusz Ausz

Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin (Poland)
Email: m.ausz@poczta.umcs.lublin.pl
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7014-8164

The Piarist College in Vitebsk

Kolegium pijarów w Witebsku

Піярская калегія ў Віцебску

Abstract

This paper is concerned with the history of the Vitebsk college of Piarist priests – the least known establishment run by this Order, and the last Piarist establishment founded before 1772. The college was located within the administrative limits of the Lithuanian Province. Due to the scarce sources, especially from the 18th century, little is known about its history. The Vitebsk college was one of the last such establishments founded by the Order. After the First Partition of Poland the college became part of Russia. Consequently, the Piarist school in Vitebsk operated outside the structures of the Commission of National Education and as such has received little interest from researchers in the field of 18th-century Polish education. This paper aims to provide an outline of the Vitebsk college's history based on archival materials found through research in the Belarusian National Historic Archive in Minsk, the Lithuanian National Historic Archive in Vilnius and the General Archive of the Piarist Order in Rome. These sources have not been used by Polish researchers thus far. Hence, the study helps to validate and supplement existing research on this college. The funding for the establishment of the college was provided around 1753 by Vitebsk citizens Adam and Anna Świrszczewski. A year later they funded the construction of a wooden church and outbuildings. The college operated a school, which was temporarily relocated to a new foundation in Dubrowna (1785–1799), with the Vitebsk Piarists running only the parish. In 1822 the Tsarist government relocated the Vitebsk Piarists to Polock. Later, in 1830, the monastery and the school again changed location, this time to Vilnius. The Order would never return to Vitebsk.

Keywords: Viciebsk, Piarists, Piarist schools, education

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 29/11/2026 10:53:17

Abstrakt

Artykuł dotyczy dziejów kolegium witebskiego księży pijarów, najmniej znanej szkoły tego zakonu. Niewiele zachowało się źródeł na temat tej placówki edukacyjnej, szczególnie z XVIII w., dlatego jej losy są mało znane. Było ono jednym z ostatnich kolegiów założonych przez to zgromadzenie. Po I rozbiorze kolegium znalazło się w granicach państwa rosyjskiego, dlatego szkoła pijarska w Witebsku nie została włączona w struktury Komisji Edukacji Narodowej, a tym samym nie budziła większego zainteresowania badaczy polskiej oświaty XVIII w. Celem artykułu było przedstawienie działalności kolegium witebskiego. W pracy wykorzystano materiały archiwalne, do których dotarto w wyniku kwerend w Narodowym Archiwum Historycznym Białorusi w Mińsku, Litewskim Państwowym Archiwum Historycznym w Wilnie oraz Archiwum Generalnym Zakonu Pijarów w Rzymie. Dotychczas nie były one brane pod uwagę przez polskich badaczy. Pozwoliło to zweryfikować, a także w znacznym stopniu uzupełnić, badania dotyczące tej instytucji. Kolegium zostało ufundowane około 1753 r. przez obywateli miasta Adama i Annę Świrszczewskich, rok później ufundowano drewniany kościół i zabudowania gospodarcze. Przy kolegium funkcjonowała szkoła, która na pewien czas pod koniec XVIII w. została przeniesiona do nowej fundacji w Dubrownie (1785–1799), a w Witebsku zakonnicy prowadzili tylko parafię. W 1822 r. pijarzy witebscy zostali przeniesieni przez rząd carski do Połocka, skąd następnie w 1830 r. klasztor oraz szkołę przeniesiono do Wilna. Zgromadzenie nie wróciło do Witebska.

Słowa kluczowe: Witebsk, pijarzy, szkoły pijarskie, edukacja

Анатацыя

Артыкул прысвечаны гісторыі віцебскай калегіі ксяндзоў піяраў, найменш вядомай школы гэтага каталіцкага манаскага ордэна. Яна была апошняй піярскай школай, утворанай да 1772 г. Адміністрацыйна адносілася да т.зв. літоўскай правінцыі. На сённяшні дзень маем няшмат крыніц па тэме гэтай школы, асабліва ў XVIII ст., таму яе гісторыя слаба вывучана. Гэта адна з апошніх піярскіх школ. Пасля першага падзелу Польшчы гэтая калегія знаходзілася ў межах Расійскай Імперыі, што паўплывала на тое, чаму Віцебская піярская школа не ўвайшла ў склад Камісіі нацыянальнай адукацыі і не выклікала зацікаўлення з боку даследчыкаў польскай асветы XVIII ст. Мэтай дадзенага артыкула было выяўленне дзейнасці віцебскай калегіі на базе архівальных матэрыялаў, якія знаходзяцца ў Нацыянальным гістарычным архіве Беларусі ў Мінску, Літоўскім дзяржаўным гістарычным архіве ў Вільні, Генеральным архіве ордэна піяраў у Рыме. Дасюль гэтыя матэрыялы не выкарыстоўваліся польскімі даследчыкамі. Такім чынам, мы змаглі не толькі параўнаць дакументы з нашымі ўяўленнямі пра гэтую калегію, але і грунтоўна дапоўніць матэрыял. Школа была створана каля 1753 г. пры падтрымцы жыхароў горада Адама і Анны Свіршэўскіх, годам пазней былі пабудаваны драўляны касцёл і гаспадарчыя памяшканні. Пры калегіі функцыянавала школа, якая на пэўны час напрыканцы XVIII ст. была перанесена ў новы фонд у Дуброўню (1785–1799), у Віцебску тады функцыянавала толькі парафія. У 1822 г. расійскія ўлады перанеслі віцебскіх піяраў у Полацк, адкуль у 1830 г. манастыр разам са школай зноў быў перанесены, на гэты раз у Вільню. Манаскі ордэн піяраў ніколі больш у Віцебск не вярнуўся.

Ключавыя словы: Віцебск, піяры, піярскія школы, адукацыя

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 29/11/2026 10:53:17

The Vitebsk college was the last Piarist establishment founded before 1772. The college was located within the administrative limits of the Lithuanian Province. Due to the scarce sources, especially from the 18th century, little is known about its history. After the First Partition of Poland, the college became part of Russia. Consequently, the Piarist school in Vitebsk operated outside the structures of the Commission of National Education, which is why it has received little interest from historians investigating the educational system of that period. The funding for the establishment of the college was provided around 1753 by Vitebsk citizens Adam and Anna Świrszczewski. The following year saw the construction of a wooden church and outbuildings. The stone church was consecrated in 1788. In addition, the founders endowed the Piarists with 1,000 thalers, and the amount was invested at interest in the property of Vitebsk Mayor Jan Iholnik. After some time, this modest fund had grown to include endowments from the Pociej family (1,200 thalers), Vitebsk *Chorąży* (a military rank) Mohuczy (100 thalers), the Kossów family (200 thalers) and a Milkiewicz (800 thalers). In 1761 Michał Mikosz, the cavalry master (*rotmistrz*) of the Vitebsk Voivodeship and a subchamberlain court judge, endowed the Piarists with *jurydyka* – a tract of land located near the city – in exchange for 'a year of intercessions for all souls perished and unsaved'. In 1763 Vitebsk Mayor Jan Iholnik, together with his wife Anna, donated 550 thalers in exchange for two masses on their behalf each month during their life and after their death. Over time the college would obtain other funds, real property dispositions, money from mass intentions, and other types of donations. At the beginning of the 19th century, the college owned seven squares in the city, but the income they provided was insignificant, as were the endowed amounts. It was enough to pay for day-to-day needs, but too little to make investments, for which the Piarists had to raise additional funds (NHAB, 1781, 26, 1387, p. 1; Gozdawa, 1910, pp. 109–110).

In 1788, after resignation by the Revd Ignacy Szostakowski, a Livonian canon, the Vitebsk Piarists took over the administration of the Saint Barbara Parish near Vitebsk. It was located two versts from the city, en route to Gródek (Horodek), north of Vitebsk. The Parish was established in 1782. According to a January 1805 account by an inspector, the parishioners were not many, and usually few attended services. Holidays were an exception, especially Saint Barbara's Day, which included a church fair, drawing more people to the church. In 1805, the parish comprised 356 sacrament takers and 50 parishioners who did not take sacraments. In 1804, a total of 11 men and 10 women died, 14 girls and 17 boys were baptised, and 10 couples married (NHABM, 1781, 26, 1387, p. 338). There were no church fraternities, and no hospitals or schools in the parish. The parish's funds were as follows: its annual income was only 50 roubles – 'no offers save for the scanty collections' (NHAB, 1781, 26, No. 1387, p. 336). Invested in the Nieporot property, the fund's amount of 4,000 roubles yielded an annual interest of 240 roubles. The parish's grange had no subjects, but there was a 'large tavern with a stable', bringing 150 roubles in annual profit. Also, there were no domestics on the grange – 'there are no domestics, for the Vitebsk Piarists who support this church

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 29/11/2026 10:53:17

attend to the work themselves' (NHAB, 1781, 26, 1387, p. 336). Thus, the total annual revenue of the parish in the early 19th century amounted to 440 roubles. The 1816 figures for the college alone were as follows: 6,113.95 roubles in revenue and 6,107.38 roubles in expenditures. Its income was only 6.57 roubles. An 1818 inspection report provides the following description of the college:

> On Połocka Street, there is the college of the Vitebsk Piars. Its buildings are spread over a rectangular area of five morgens, partially walled in, partially enclosed by thick planks. In front of the church there is a brick gate with a framed, hinged double door with iron pivots – fronting the street to the east, there is a second, wooden gate leading to the courtyard, with a double door, hinged and with iron pivots – on this square lie the following erections: 1. Church 2. Monastery 3. Dormitory (konwikt) and schools 4. Annexe for domestics 5. Granary 6. Icehouse 7. Stable with coach houses 8. Brewery 9. Pigpens. Their description is as follows.
>
> Church: The church of the Vitebsk Piarists is made of brick, forming a small square, with two towers and a dome, above which is an iron cross. With a shingle roof. Funded in the year 1754 by Świrszczewski, a citizen of the city of Vitebsk. Consecrated by His Reverence the Metropolitan in the year 1788, it is in need of repair, particularly in cornices, and requires plastering in some places. (NHAB, 1781, 26, 1401, p. 1)

The Piarist Order is a teaching order and, as such, its main activity is to run schools. Offering tuition-free education, Piarits schools were very popular with the moderately affluent and poor nobility. The only fees charged were those for the so-called directors – supervisors and tutors, usually the most senior students. Also, those who wanted their boys to stay at the *konwikt* – a type of dormitory with additional tuition and supervision, available in some of the Piarist establishments – had to pay. According to Józef Łukaszewicz, the Piarist school with the *konwikt* in Vitebsk was active already in 1755. In its first years the establishment operated under the Piarist Constitution of 1694. The college was headed by the Rector and managed by the Prefect. A Piarist school comprised of nine classes. The first three were elementary classes: *infimia legentium*, *media legentium* and *suprema legentium*. These classes were usually placed in one lecture hall and as such often considered a single entity called *parva*. This often led to erroneous conclusions – some studies claim that the full curriculum at Piarist schools included seven classes, not nine. What followed were the three grammatical classes: *infima grammaticae*, *media grammaticae* and *suprema grammaticae, or syntaxa*. The last three were: *humanitas*, *rhetorica et poesis* and *philosophia*. Only a handful of establishments, those best organised and properly staffed, offered philosophy classes (Biegański, 1898, pp. 8–12).

The Vitebsk establishment came into existence in the year which saw the announcement of the Piarist school reform authored by the Revd Stanisław Konarski, but the Lithuanian Province did not implement it until almost ten years later, and did so gradually. Under Konarski's reform, there would be lessened emphasis on Latin

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 29/11/2026 10:53:17

tuition. Most importantly, however, it introduced the teaching of the Polish language. Other important new subjects included history, geography, algebra, geometry, physics and modern philosophy. Notably, modern philosophy teaching was based on the works of the greats such as John Locke, Francis Bacon, Descartes, Christian Wolff and Nicolas Malebranche. Moreover, new handbooks were introduced. They were printed by the Piarists in Warsaw. The structure of the Piarist schools did not change much under the new legislation. Tuition took place in the following classes – *parva*, *infima*, *gramatyka*, *syntaxa*, *humanitas*, *rhetorica* and *philosophia*. The duration of study was eight or nine years, depending on whether or not the first two classes were combined (the schools were left to decide in this regard). Rhetoric and philosophy were both two-year classes (Ordynacje, 1959, pp. 118–259).

In 1761, when Kacper Trzeszkowski was the Provincial, Konarski's reform was adapted to meet the needs of Lithuanian Province schools. The text of this adapted reform was printed and published under the title *Methodus docendi pro Scholis Piis Provintiae Lithunae.* This revised version, which actually included only the fourth part of *Ordynacja wizytacji apostolskiej* (Regulations of the Apostolic Visitation)[1], i.e. the Konarski's Acts, was authored by the Revd Jerzy Ciapiński. While the class division remained the same, much of the contemporary literature was left out, and there was no mention of Konarski. What were the reasons behind the Lithuanian Piarists' decision to limit the scope of the reform? Łukasz Kurdybacha offers the following explanation:

> What were the reasons why the readers and, above all, the Piarist teachers in Lithuania were kept in the dark about the name of the famed reformer of the Piarist colleges in the Crown? It is now impossible to tell due to the lack of any source information. It could be that the conservative Piarist circles in Lithuania were so unwilling to embrace Konarski's reform that the Order's senior echelons were not in the position to openly admit to copying the reform, since this would put the whole reformatory effort at risk. One other possible explanation was that the senior Piarist echelons in Lithuania felt a certain envy – not readily perceptible, but clearly transpiring on occasions – for the Crown Piarists, making them reluctant to admit that they had modelled their reform after the work of the Collegium Nobilium's founder. Also, they could have been concerned that by officially revealing their attempts at the partial implementation of the Konarski's reform, they would cause Konarski's supporters to postulate that all the Piarist schols in Lithuania follow the recommendations of their brothers from the Crown. The reasons could have been many. However, while there may be some truth to each theory, none offers a full explanation (Kurdybacha, 1976, pp. 129–130).

While all these factors probably played a role, it is reasonable to assume that the key reasons were the concern about the nobility's unwillingness to embrace such radical changes in the school system, as well as the funding and staffing issues. Never-

[1] *Methodus docendi was published in 1761 and 1762 in Vilnius*. Łukasz Kurdybacha was wrong in questioning the first issue of 1761. See: Kurdybacha, 1976, pp. 127–129.

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 29/11/2026 10:53:17

theless, the reform did come about, and the Lithuanian Piarists adapted rather easily to the new framework established by the Commission of National Education (CNE). Regrettably, the Vitebsk school remained outside that framework and continued to teach according to *Methodus decendi*. It is very likely, however, that the establishment incorporated some of the assumptions of the reform, as the Piarists would often switch schools, so the Vitebsk teachers were probably familiar with the CNE legislation after working in other Piarist schools.

Below is the typical timetable at an 18th century Piarist school in the Lithuanian Province.

6.00 – reveille, prayer, revision, breakfast.
7.00 – mass.
8.00–10.00 – school.
10.00–12.00 – return to lodgings/dormitory, preparation for lessons.
12.00–14.00 – dinner, rest, revision.
14.00–16.00 – school.
16.00–19.00 – return to lodgings/dormitory, tea, study.
19.00–21.00 – supper, rest, study.
21.00 – prayer, sleep ((APPZP, Col. Lid., 2, p. 72).

According to Łukaszewicz, in 1755 the college was headed by the Revd Józefat Ilimiński, the Revd Stanisław Dolmat taught history and mathematics, the Revd Walenty Prusiecki taught philosophy, the Revd Michał Szeluta lectured in speech training and was the *regens* (head) of the *konwikt*. The Lithuanian Province register does not include the names Dolmat and Prusiecki. They were probably not members of the congregation, employed due to the teacher shortage during the school's formative period. The philosophy lessons, removed from the curriculum after some years, might be proof of that. Since the records from the school's initial period are scarce, it is worth noting the authorities and faculty members of the Vitebsk house, based on the records kept in the Roman archive.

School year: 1782/83:
The Revd Fabian Eliaszewicz – Rector
The Revd Szymon Łabeykowski – Deputy Rector
The Revd Kazimierz Kruszewski – House Counsellor, Spiritual Father and Confessor
The Revd Andrzej Gumkowski – Prefect, Preacher
The Revd Ignacy Szostakowski – Professor of Speech Training
The Revd Daniel Taraszkiewicz – Master of Grammar
Seminarist Aleksander Głogowski – Master of Elementary Education, Catechist
School Year 1783/84:
The Revd Fabian Eliaszewicz – Rector

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 29/11/2026 10:53:17

The Revd Szymon Łabeykowski – Deputy Rector
The Revd Andrzej Gumkowski – Prefect, Preacher
The Revd Ignacy Szostakowski – Parish Administrator, Preacher
The Revd Michał Jordan – Prefect, Professor of Speech Training and Mathematics
The Revd Daniel Taraszkiewicz – Master of Grammar
Seminarist Antoni Kętrzyński – Master of Elementary Education, Catechnist (ASGP, Reg. Prov. Lit. 59A, 1, page missing).

The school's staffing in the following year is very interesting, involving a division into three classes staffed by three professors, suggesting that the Vitebsk establishment's organisational structure was modelled after a sub-departmental school under the 1783 CNE legislation.

School year: 1784/85
The Revd Fabian Eliaszewicz – Rector
The Revd Szymon Łabeykowski – Deputy Rector
The Revd Andrzej Gumkowski – Prefect, Preacher
The Revd Ignacy Szostakowski – Parish Administrator, Preacher
The Revd Daniel Taraszkiewicz – House Procurator, Depositary
The Revd Michał Jordan – Theologian *Ad Aulam*
The Revd Józef Ostrowski – Professor of Third-Grade Education
Seminarist Ignacy Jankowski – Professor of Second-Class Education
Seminarist Antoni Kętrzyński – Professor of First-Class Education, Catechist (ASGP, Reg. Prov. Lit. 59A, 1, page missing).

This was the last school year before the establishment's relocation to Dubrowna (Dąbrowna), a move prompted by an endowment from Prince Grigory Potemkin, who gave the Piarist college 15,000 roubles and a large grange in Azorkowo. After acquiring this property in 1782, Potemkin removed the Bernandines and decided to have the Piarists move in to their monastery to run their school in there. The school relocated there in 1785, with only two or three Piarists remaining in Vitebsk to manage the parish. Below is Marek Gozdawa's account:

> The Piarists had schools in Dąbrówna, too, but only for some dozen years. Alas, we have not come by any information about this educational establishment! Yet, we do know that Anioł Dowgird took lessons there, and an individual of note he was indeed. Born in 1776 in the Mścisław Voivodeship, he began his education in 1786 in the Jesuit schools in Mohylew and Mścisław, and eventually came to the Dąbrówna Piarist establishment to receive two years of teachings in rhetoric, physics, history, logic and French, and with that, which must have been before 1790, he completed his secular education (Gozdawa, 1910, p. 96).

Anioł Dowgird attended the Dubrowna school in 1789–91, and on 17 August 1791 he joined the Piarist congregation. He would go on to become a long-standing teacher in Piarist schools. He was a philosopher and Professor of Logic, Psychology and Philosophy at the Vilnius University, where his students included Adam Mickiewicz.

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 29/11/2026 10:53:17

The preserved teacher registers at the Dubrowna school from the establishment's first three years in existence confirm that the class division devised by the CNE was maintained.

The Dubrowna college had the following authorities and faculty members in the school year 1788/89:

The Revd Fabian Eliaszewicz – Rector
The Revd. Marcin Quander – Deputy Rector
The Revd Szymon Łabeykowski – Vitebsk Parish
The Revd Szymon Łabeykowski – Vitebsk Parish
The Revd Ignacy Szostakowski – Vitebsk Parish Curate
The Revd Daniel Taraszkiewicz – Preacher
The Revd Ignacy Jankowski – Preacher, Confessor
The Revd Józef Ostrowski – Professor of Third-Class Education
The Revd Michał Skibniewski – Professor of Second-Class Education
The Revd Chryzostom Iwanowski – Professor of First-Class Education, Catechist
The Revd Augustyn Frantz – function unknown (AGSP, Reg. Prov. Lit. 59A, 1, page missing).

In 1799 the Piarists left Dubrowna to move back to Vitebsk due to a dispute with Prince Franciszek Ksawery Lubomirski – the new owner of the Dubrowna property.

> The Dąbrowna property did not remain under Potemkin for long: around 1787 he sold or exchanged it for the Smila land in Ukraine (the current Kiev Governorate) owned by Franciszek Ksawery Lubomirski, Lieutenant General in the rank of Sieciechów Starost. The new heir to the Dąbrowna property would not be remembered favourably, as he displayed no positive attributes... vain, bad-tempered, irascible and vindictive; he was not on good terms with the Piarists, and here is why: Lubomirski had a daughter by the name of Klementyna, who married a Piotr Kroger. She did so against her father's will when he was away from home. Having received the indult from Siestrzeńcewicz, Józef od Św. Jana Nepomucena Ostrowski, the then Rector of the Dubrowna school, and later the Rector of the Vitebsk establishment, as well as the Provincial, solemnised the marriage. This made Lubomirski wrathful, such that he decided to get rid of the Piarists. Siestrzeńcewicz, always indulgent to the wealthy and powerful, came to his aid in materialising this plan, following Lubomirski's promise that he would carry the Piarists' Dubrowna funds (except for Azorków), purported to amount to 5,000 roubles (in all likelihood from various endowments), over to the income of the Mohylew Chapter. At the same time, in 1799, Emperor Paul decided to give shelter to the French Trappists, and Siestrzeńcewicz was supposed to find them a place where they could stay: and find he did, in the Piarist monastery in Dąbrówna, among other locations, ordering the Piarists to go back to Vitebsk.
>
> As we know, what was left of the French Trappist Order did not last long in Paul's state, and once expelled, the Piarist would never return to Dąbrówna. Lubomirski acted on his promise and gave some of the Piarists' endowment to the Mohylew Chapter.

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 29/11/2026 10:53:17

> And so in 1799 the Piarists again moved to Vitebsk, where they would have much more leeway in pursuing their teaching profession, and this was the third time in their life and history that they relocated (Gozdawa, 1910, p. 97).

Dubrowna's acquisition by Lubomirski put the Piarists in financial trouble. Lubomirski had blocked the interest on the amount endowed by Potemkin. The Piarists took the matter to the court, but the case lingered on until the Piarists eventually left Vitebsk in 1821, never to be awarded the sums claimed. Thus, it was probably for that reason, and not due to their mismanagement, that they left Dubrowna with unpaid liabilities. They were also suspected of having misappropriated some of the furnishings and equipment left by the Bernardines. The only part of Potemkin's donation that they kept possession of was the Azorkowo grange. Moreover, they were having issues obtaining their interest on the sum invested by Świrszczewscy in the Iholnik family's property. The situation in 1818 was as follows:

> Proceedings. The Vitebsk College instigated proceedings to claim interest on the debenture amount of 1,000. The sum was endowed by the Świrszczewscy, who had been dispossessed of the tenement. On that debenture amount the Piarists collected a regular interest of 7% until the aforementioned tenement passed to the successors from the Iholnik family. The Iholniks would then start acting evasive, exploiting loopholes to delay interest payments due to the Piarists. Eventually, they forced the Piarists to claim their dues at court. Thus, proceedings had been instigated in that matter at the Land Court of Vitebsk, and these remain as yet unsettled for reasons of various nature.
>
> The second proceeding was brought by the Vitebsk College in respect of a sum of 15,000 roubles, endowed by His Grace Prince Potemkin for Education in Dąbrowna, on which the Piarists were entitled to collect interest; yet, faced with the Prince Lubomirski's evasiveness in the payment of that interest, they were left with no choice but to take legal action. The proceedings were instigated in the Babienowice County Land Court, and resulted in the Piarists' being awarded two Decrees, and after that a Secular Resolution to Execute these Decrees. However, His Grace Prince Lubomirski succeeded in having the Senate put the whole matter on hold and send it to another court, where it had lingered, along with unpaid interest, for 26 years.
>
> Jurydykas. Located within the city of Vitebsk alone are seven squares owned by the college, and these are:
>
> 1. Past the monastery, across the street towards the Dźwina River, is a square with a vegetable garden – part acquired, part donated in exchange by His Highness General Hurko – and in this square lies a Piarist-funded House of eight rooms, with a separate bakery building, including a brick-base chamber, with a shingle roof. The House's function is one of tax administration and as such yields no profit to the Piarists.
> 2. The built-up square in Połocka Street, bought from a Jew named Hella, pays the Piarists 6 roubles and 75 copecks.

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 29/11/2026 10:53:17

3. The built-up square in Nowa Street, bought from Hrehory Lorka, pays the Piarists 6 roubles and 75 copecks.
4. The built-up square bought from Rozen the Butcher and located in that same street pays the Piaristst 12 roubles.
5. The built-up square bought from Widow Maruszka and located in that same street pays the Piarists 15 roubles.
6. The built-up square bought from a Jew named Mejer pays the Piarists 10 roubles.
7. In Ruś Słobodzka, between Piotr Milikiewicz Square and His Lordship Daniel Dyman Square, there used to be two plots of land. Now, however, Vitebsk Citizens, numbering six people, had build their homes and set up their gardens there, and each of them is obligated to pay the Piarists one and a half rouble, making a total of 9 roubles. Reliance on these payments may withal not be placed. The other plot is partially occupied gratuitously by the Battalion's garden, and partially vacant (NHAB, 1781, 26, 1401, pp. 5–6).

Despite these financial troubles, the school carried on teaching and developing, although the small number of students proved to be a problem. The fact that this was not the only such establishment in the city certainly was a factor. In the early 19th century there existed three secondary schools in Vitebsk: one public, one run by the Piarists and one by the Jesuits. This was causing unhealthy competition, with the schools backbiting each other, condemning each other's teaching methods, etc. Hence the inspector's postulate to reduce the number of schools in Vitebsk (LVIA, 567, 2, 197, p. 210). The Piarists themselves were even considering moving back to Dubrowna, but the plans fell through. The school operated a *konwikt* – 'collegium nobilis', charging 200 roubles in fees. Students staying at the *konwikt* were supervised by a *regens*. A French teacher also stayed at the *konwikt* to provide practical instruction (LVIA, 567, 2, 197, p. 167).

On 19 April 1800, a letter was sent to the consistory requesting approval to take over a *konwikt* fund established in 1798 by Prussian Lieutenant Jan Czaykowski for the benefit of six poor boys. He endowed them with 410 silver roubles per annum (which was interest on 14,000 silver roubles in capital), 55 silver roubles per each student and 80 silver roubles per each teacher. Originally, the *konwikt* was meant to be located within the monastery of the Vibtesk Trinitarians. It was the founder's will that the boys learn reading and writing in Polish, Russian, Latin and French, and take lessons in catechism, arithmetic, basic geography and Polish-Latin grammar. However, due to the inadequate number of teachers, the Trinitarians agreed to have the *konwikt* relocated to the Piarists' (NHAB, 1781, 26, 1, p. 263). As a result, the number of students living in the Piarists' *konwikt* (called *konwiktors*) increased substantially. While in 1800 there were three of them, a year later the number increased to 14. As shown by inspection records, the Piarists did more in terms of education than the founder wished for, letting the boys attend their school. The *konwikt* provided only auxiliary instruction.

Once back in Vitebsk, the school expanded to cover four classes. The teaching at the Piarist institution was still influenced by the CNE. The college used Polish hand-

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 29/11/2026 10:53:17

books, but also taught Russian, French and German. Starting from April 1802, interested students could take up courses in drawing and dancing. Students received 35 hours of instruction a week: 20 hours of core courses and 15 hours of modern language courses. Drawing and dancing lessons involved additional hours. The timetable had not changed much since the mid-18th century. After the education reform of 1804 the school was upgraded to a four-class county (*poviat*) school. In effect, its graduates were eligible to apply for a university admission.

Between 1802 and 1819, the Vitebsk college experienced its 'golden age' under the rectorship of the Revd Aleksander Turski. The Revd Turski was an enlightened man who had spent several years travelling Europe, during which time he also received extensive education. At the Piarist college he taught physics, chemistry and French, and also supervised the quality of teaching and maintained discipline. Under his management the school stood out primarily through its high standard of teaching the exact sciences. He also set up a botanical garden, an orangery, a modern chemical laboratory, and a physics and mineralogy laboratory, and also had existing buildings refurbished, cleaned up and expanded, and new ones erected. Moreover, Turski enlarged the library collection, mostly including scientific works, to 1,906 titles by 1820 (NHAB, 1781, 26, 1401, p. 3). As one of the inspectors noted: 'Rarely do you see a school other than a university with such a great many teaching aids; a well-stocked library, richly furnished rooms and laboratories, and a wonderful botanical garden – and all this owing to the Rector's efforts' (Gozdawa, 1940, p. 104). Moreover, the Revd Turski opened a pharmacy, and treated people at no charge, which had earned him great sympathy in the local community.

According to a 1808 account by inspector Piotr Ceyss, the school had good teaching results: 'The progress made by the students is quite commendable indeed…' (LVIA, 567, 2, 197, k. 165). Nevertheless, he deplored that learning by memorisation was the principal method applied at the college. The faculty included four Piarists and two secular teachers – Kazimierz Pinatel, a born Frenchman, who taught French, and Józef Sommer, a Vitebsk middle school teacher, who provided instruction in German. The Prefect for the school was the Revd Michał Połoński. This is what Inspector Ceyss wrote about the Rector and other teachers:

> His Excellency Turski, highly regarded as a teacher of the first order and known for his ardour emanating from devotion to the good of science and teaching [...] the school's prefect in all respects enlightened, and other teachers, namely those teaching in two lower classes, less proficient as teachers as they were, did taught with some benefit [...] The botanical garden is well-endowed with all sorts of plants and landscapes (LVIA, 567, 2, 197, p. 166).

In 1808 a total of 58 boys attended the school, 32 in Class I; 11 in Class II; 10 in Class III; and 5 in class IV. (LVIA, 567, 2, 197, p. 167). Student registers show that the Piarists admitted not only Catholics, but also Uniates and Eastern Orthodox Christians (Disuniates).

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 29/11/2026 10:53:17

Due to the lack of sources, it is impossible to explain why the school was inactive between 1815 and 1817, especially given that it continued to operate in the difficult times of Napoleon's wars with Russia. Most probably, that the only part of the school that remained open was the *konwikt*. According to Gozdawa:

> In the years 1815, 1816 and 1817, until October, there were no Piarist schools in Vitebsk. The reasons are not entirely known; what we found in the school files was only a note that the Provincial had not sent in the teachers... It was owing to the involvement of His Excellency Turski and his unwavering efforts that the school could be reopened come October (Gozdawa, 1910, p. 106).

In the aftermath of this hiatus, the school had lost some of its enrolment – as at June 1818 it had almost 40 students, including 7 *konwiktors*[2].

In January 1818, the college was visited by the Inspector in charge of Belarusian monasteries, Prelate of the Archiepiscopal See of Mohylew Antoni Majewski. This is how he described the school's buildings and furnishings:

> Konwikt: The konwikt, which is His Excellency the Rector's abode, lies opposite to the College on the same courtyard. It is made of fir wood, with a timber-lined wall foundation and a shingle roof; and a veranda in front of the entrance. There are 12 rooms inside, as well as a large room intended as a museum. Timber floors, Swedish stoves with vents and doors, supplying heat to all rooms, of which four are intended for konwiktors and the Prefect. The other four are occupied by His Excellency the Rector. There are a total of 24 windows in the house – all clear glass and double-glazed for the winter. The frames of all windows are painted white. There are a total of 16 doors, all hinged, with internal French locks and keys thereto, each made of wood and brushed with varnish-oil white paint.
>
> Schools: Two rooms in this house are intended as classrooms, and they have timber floors and three windows each – in one of them there is only one lectern fort the Professor, and students have fairly comfortable desks. They are entered from the courtyard through a door with hinges and locks. The school here has 40 students and 3 directors.
>
> Physics museum: The museum is located in one of the house's rooms – its floor is of timber, and it has four entries: one from the hall, one from the konwikt, one from His Excellency the Rector's rooms, and one from the garden. Two of the doors are double doors, one of them half-glazed, hinged, and with locks and keys. Inside there is an electric contrivance with a battery from two large glass panes – a Pneumatic Contrivance with Receptacles – a Wind Gage with a Compass and a Water Meter put on the roof – As well, there is a mineralogical collection and a chemistry laboratory collection with all the vessels.

[2] The number was 32 or 39 according to the sources. As in previous years, this discrepancy most likely stems from the number 39 encompassing students who had withdrawn from the school, or who were absent during the inspection.

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 29/11/2026 10:53:17

> Archive: set up inside that same house is an archive under the supervision of His Excellency the Rector.
>
> Library: Above the sacristy, the steps lead to a hinged door with iron butts and a lock. Its floor is of timber, its ceiling of brick. There are four clear glass windows, cabinets for book storage, of which there are eight, and the book collection numbers as follows:
>
> Bibles and canonists – 66
> Philosophers – 39
> Natural historians and medics – 99
> Physicists and chemists – 248
> Mathematicians and geographers –160
> Theologians and controversists – 98
> Holy fathers – 132
> Rhetoricians, orators and preachers – 246
> Politicians, clerical historians and secular scholars – 335
> Poets – 102
> Grammarians and dictioners – 102
> Economists and artists –54.
> The following books have been purchased and added to the collection:
> Bibles –2
> Philosophers and moralists – 4
> Natural historians and medics – 110
> Mathematicians and geographers – 89
> Rhetoricians, orators and preachers – 20 (NHAB, 1781, 26, 1401, p. 3).

The inspection made note of the rather laissez-faire lifestyle led by the younger members of the Order – disobedience to superiors, violation of the rules of enclosure, wearing civilian clothes when out in the city, paying visits to private houses, having women visitors in the monastery.

> …I have personally seen clericals in frock coats going out on their own to the city without permission and supervision, attending secular homes with nearly no trace of clergy in sight, and I have learnt from many a trustworthy person that these clericals are rather reluctant to submit to their local superiors, and to listen to their warnings; what is more, they avoid daily meditation and display a good deal of secularity in their behaviour (NHAB, 1781, 26, 1401, p. 7).

In 1820, the Piarist school admitted 11 boys from the liquidated Jesuit school, and later established a preparatory class. The school year 1821/1822 proved to be the last for the Piarist school and college in Vitebsk. In 1822 the authorities relocated the Vitebsk Piarists to Polock, where they took the famous Połock Academy over from the Jesuits, and kept running it until 1830, when the Tsarist government took possession of the buildings to set up a military school there. The Piarists took some of their

Pobrane z czasopisma Studia Bia?orutenistyczne **http://bialorutenistyka.umcs.pl**
Data: 29/11/2026 10:53:17

equipment and furnishings to Vilnius, where they opened an establishment that had not lasted even two years, shut down already in 1832 (Kadulska, 2004, p. 55; Zasztowt, 1997, p. 156). The Piarists would never return to Vitebsk, with the monastery starting to fall into disrepair, and the church being handed over to Lutherans. Today, nothing has remained of the former Piarist college. No traces exist of their lives and cultural and educational activities in Vitebsk other than those found in historical sources and accounts.

Translated into English by Marek Robak-Sobolewski

List of sources

AGSP – General Archive of the Piarist Order in Rome, Reg. Prov. Lit. – Regestrum Provniciae Lithuana, 59A.

APPZK, CL, 2 – Archive of the Polish Province of the Piarist Order in Kraków. CL – Collegium Lidense, 2.

LVIA – Lithuanian State Historical Archives, f. 567, inv. 2, d. 197.

NHAB – National Historical Archives of Belarus in Minsk, f. 1781, inv. 26, d. 1387, 1401.

References

Ausz, Mariusz. (2017). Szkoły pijarskie na Białorusi. *Studia Białorutenistyczne*, 11, pp. 11–27.

Biegański, Stanisław. (1898). *Szkoły pijarskie w Polsce*. Lwów: Związkowa Drukarnia.

Gozdawa, Marek. (1910). Wspomnienie o Pijarach witebskich. *Kwartalnik Litewski*, 1(1), pp. 89–110.

Kadulska, Irena. (2004). *Akademia Połocka. Ośrodek kultury na Kresach 1812–1820*. Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego.

Kurdybacha, Łukasz. (1976). *Reforma litewskich szkół pijarskich w 1762 r*. In: Idem. *Pisma wybrane*. Selected by J. Miaso. Vol. 3. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedgogiczne.

Łukaszewicz, Józef. (1851). *Historia szkół w Koronie i w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim od najdawniejszych czasów aż do roku 1794*. Vol. 4. Poznań: Published by Księgarnia Jana Konstantego Żupańskiego.

Ordynacje Wizytacji Apostolskiej dla Polskiej Prowincji Szkół Pobożnych. (1959). In: S. Konarski. *Pisma pedagogiczne*, with a preface and notes by Ł. Kurdybacha, Wrocław–Kraków–Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Ossolineum.

Zasztowt, Leszek. (1997). *Kresy 1832–1864. Szkolnictwo na ziemiach litewskich i ruskich dawnej Rzeczypospolitej*. Warszawa. Wydawnictwo Instytutu Historii Nauki PAN.

Article submission date: 20 December 2018