

Sensational news – Akiba Rubinstein was born on 1 December 1880 in Stawiski

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The year 2012 was important for chess players as a year of Akiba Rubinstein who achieved his greatest successes 100 years ago. The Malopolska Chess Association organized a few events and presentations. In search of documents illustrating the life of Akiba we found that they gave different dates of birth – the most frequent is 12 December 1882, but sometimes also 12 October 1882. There is a document in Antwerp archives (*“Antwerp Police Immigration Index, 1840-1930”*) stating Akiba’s year of birth to be 1880. The DOB on his gravestone at the Brussels cemetery (a photo of the monument was taken recently by the granddaughter of Mr Janusz Woda, president of the Polish Chess Federation) is 1 December 1880. A search in the State Archives of Bialystok and Lomza (Akiba’s birth place Stawiski is situated in the Lomza district) has confirmed the DOB to be 1 December 1880. The wedding certificate prepared by the City Mayor of Szczuczyn states:

“Bachelor Akiwa Rubinsztyn, born in Stawiski on 1 December 1880, son of Rywa and Rejza from Denenberg, married Genia Lew, born in Szczucin on 7 July 1893, daughter of Benjamin and Sara Lew from Raduszkanska.”

There is no wedding date in the document – we know from other documents that the wedding took place on 30 March 1917 – and the document itself was written on 12 June 1920. Poland didn’t exist at that time – it was divided between Russia, Prussia and Austria – and Akiba was born in the Russian part. These differences can also be attributed to the fact that different calendars – Jewish, catholic and Russian orthodox – were in use. Documents for non-Christians didn’t start until 15 April 1918 when Poland became independent, they were prepared according to statements related to former events, so this is probably the reason why we have so many different dates. But as a result of the present research we have a new date of birth, confirmed by documents:

Akiba Kiwelowicz Rubinstein was born on 1 December 1880 in Stawiski.