

Research Article

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New Facts from the Biography of N.V. Sklifosovsky

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ABSTRACT The study is dedicated to N.V. Sklifosovsky and aims to expand and preserve the historical memory of this outstanding scientist, surgeon and physiologist, teacher and public figure on the example of newly discovered and rare facts related to the life and creative achievements of N.V. Sklifosovsky.

As a result of our research, two new historical documents from the Poltava Regional Archive were introduced into scientific circulation for the first time: N.V. Sklifosovsky's letters to his daughter Olga Sklifosovskaya-Yakovleva and his closest student, surgeon Mikhail P. Yakovlev, shedding light on their family relationships and providing facts about the construction and opening of the "Clinical town" on the Maiden's Field (Devichye Pole). It follows from this correspondence that N.V. Sklifosovsky took an active part in its foundation. This side of his activity has not been reflected in the scientific and historical literature.

Other rare facts include a photograph of the coat of arms of Privy Councilor Nikolai Sklifosovsky, time of its approval and explanations for the symbols depicted on it. There are also photographs of the oil painting by A. Sidorov located in Vinnitsa which depicts the arrival of N.V. Sklifosovsky to Vishnya estate of the great Russian surgeon N.I. Pirogov, as well as the gravestone of N.V. Sklifosovsky's son Vladimir with the first bars of P.I. Tchaikovsky.

For the first time in the scientific literature, photographs of a large, full-length portrait of N.V. Sklifosovsky by the artist E.V. Kudryavtsev (1947), as well as N.V. Sklifosovsky's great-grandson Leon Birkett by this portrait (1975).

Thus, this article makes a new contribution to the history of Russian medicine.

Keywords: history of medicine, N.V. Sklifosovsky

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Amazing, bright and comprehensive biography of N.V. Sklifosovsky, as well as the difficult and tragic pages of his life and family, are, unfortunately, set out in a small number of domestic monographs and scientific articles [1–4]. N.V. Sklifosovsky is a world-famous scientist and surgeon, a participant in 4 wars as a military surgeon. He introduced the principles of antisepsis and asepsis into domestic surgery, and was one of the first to use local anesthesia. N.V. Sklifosovsky was a pioneer of abdominal surgery, operated on the organs of the digestive tract, genitourinary system; in 1865 he performed the first successful ovariectomies. He developed methods of surgical treatment of cerebral hernias. Together with I.I. Nasilov N.V. Sklifosovsky developed an original method of connecting bones - the "Russian lock" (Sklifosovsky's lock). He put into practice the ideas of N.I. Pirogov: the approach of helping the wounded to the place of hostilities, their sorting and the use of a plaster cast. Developed methods of surgical treatment of wounds of the chest and abdomen and their complications. The significance of the life and work of N.V. Sklifosovsky in the development of domestic medicine was briefly and succinctly assessed by V.I. Razumovsky: "If N.I. Pirogov was the first major representative of scientific medicine in Russia and the first public doctor, and S.P. Botkin - his successor, then Nikolai Vasilievich Sklifosovsky was a worthy and largest successor of their work. N.V. Sklifosovsky is rightfully considered one of the major domestic forerunners who prepared the foundation for the further development of military field surgery, the improvement of the staged treatment of the wounded and patients in the system of medical support for troops [5].

The book "N.V. Sklifosovsky. Selected works" was published (Moscow, 1953), which contains the main scientific works of the scientist [6].

N.V. Sklifosovsky was one of the founders of Russian surgical printing. He was the first in Russia to introduce preparation and publication of annual reports on the activities of the faculty surgical clinic of the Imperial Medical University. There were few journals in Russia at that time, Russian scientists had no media outlet to publish the articles, so everything new had to be drawn only from foreign sources. He writes ironically to his daughter: "Really, what are Russian magazines for! Everything can be learned through foreign literature! This is the aphorism our representatives of scientific surgery are accustomed to be content with" [7]. N.V. Sklifosovsky founded and published at his own expense in Moscow together with P.I. Dyakonov journal "Surgical Chronicle", and "Chronicle of Russian Surgery" together with N.A. Velyaminov in St. Petersburg.

In the scientific and medical library of the N.V. Sklifosovsky Research Institute for Emergency Medicine, the originals of the journal "Surgical Chronicle" and Sklifosovsky's article in the Proceedings of the 4th Congress of Surgeons of 1892 are stored in the Rare Books Department (photo 1).

N.V. Sklifosovsky is one of the initiators and founders of the Society of Russian Doctors in memory of N.I. Pirogov, Pirogov surgical congresses. He personally received permission from Alexander III to erect a monument to N.I. Pirogov in Moscow. On the Internet resources [8], we found a rare oil painting by A. Sidorov, located in Vinnitsa, which depicts the arrival of N.V. Sklifosovsky to the estate of N.I. Pirogov, Vishnya. The student came for his teacher to accompany him to Moscow for the celebrations dedicated to the 50th anniversary of his scientific activity (photo 2). At the beginning of 1881, N.I. Pirogov drew attention to pain and irritation on the mucous membrane of the hard palate. On May 24, 1881 N.V. Sklifosovsky established that he had cancer of the upper jaw and considered an urgent operation necessary. The news that he had a malignant tumor plunged Nikolai Ivanovich into a severe depression. Having refused the operation, he leaves for his student T. Billroth in Vienna, who, having examined him, was also confirmed the serious diagnosis, but refused to operate. In November of the same year, Pirogov died. N.V. Sklifosovsky reproached himself for not being able to convince Pirogov to perform a timely radical surgical intervention [9].



Photo 1. Chronicle of Russian Surgery. Full filing for 1897 (Rare Book's Fund, N.V. Sklifosovsky Research Institute for Emergency Medicine)



Photo 2. The arrival of N.V. Sklifosovsky to the Vishnya estate. Painting by A. Sidorov

Without repeating the well-known moments of the biography of N.V. Sklifosovsky, let us dwell on new facts and little-known archival documents about him, which we are introducing into scientific circulation for the first time. These are archival documents of the Poltava Regional State Archive, which were provided to us by a local historian, candidate of technical sciences O.I. Okara in exchange for the information we have about N.V. Sklifosovsky. We have copies of 2 archival files for No. 14 and No. 20 of the Poltava Regional Archive [10, 11], in which N.V. Sklifosovsky written by his daughter Olga Sklifosovskaya-Yakovleva and a student of his scientific school M.P. Yakovlev, her husband. These letters were written by him personally. The text of the article also contains some old photographs of the Yakovtsy estate, transferred to the archive by Sklifosovsky's granddaughter Elizaveta Yakovleva-Sklifosovskaya (photo 3).

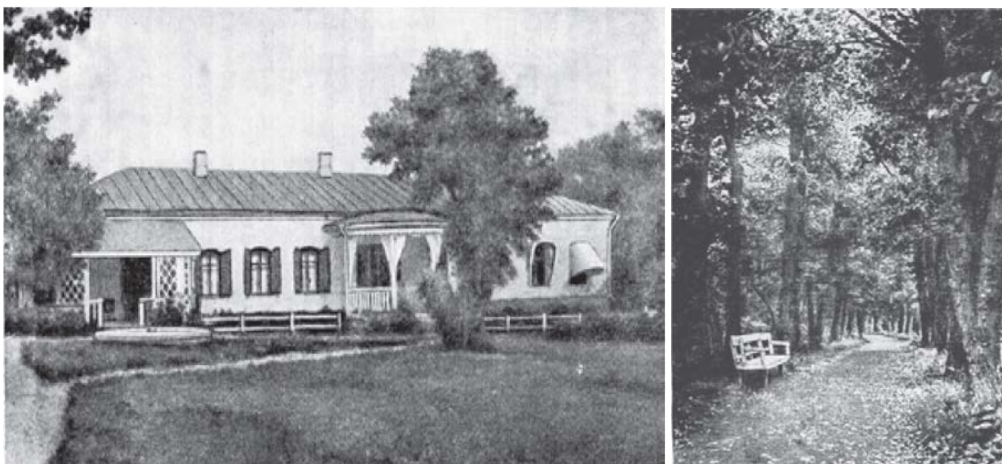


Photo 3. The Yakovtsy estate near Poltava (Poltava Regional Archive)

A letter dated July 17, 1887, sent to daughter Olga Sklifosovskaya-Yakovleva, contains 4 handwritten pages (photo 4). It was written in Poltava, in the Yakovtsy family estate. In it, Sklifosovsky describes a family vacation in the summer on his beloved estate, talks about the abundant harvest of fruits and bread. He shares news, says hello to his son-in-law. The letter is warm and joyful, ending with the words "Your loving father." It fully confirms the words of Olga Nikolayevna, who in her memoirs says that some considered her father to be a proud and inaccessible person, since in appearance he was really overstrict and calm, but in fact a surprisingly soft, affectionate and kind person. The family for Sklifosovsky, which he was deprived of from childhood, as he was given by his parents to be raised in an Odessa shelter due to poverty, was indeed one of the main components of his life, one of its most important values. Hence there was such attention to relatives.

At this time, not overshadowed by any adversity, the Sklifosovsky family begins to call their estate not "Yakovtsy", but "Joy". At the end of the letter is the signature "Joy", the former "Yakovtsy". And only after the voluntary departure from the life of his son Vladimir in 1890, Nikolai Vasilyevich asks to name the estate "Yakovtsy" again, where his son was buried. He bequeathed to bury himself next to the grave of Vladimir, which

was done. P.I. Tchaikovsky, a close friend of the Sklifosovsky family, who personally knew Vladimir, dedicated to the memory of their son the Elegiac Song written by him in 1893 to console his parents. This is a very famous and often performed piece. The first bars of this music are engraved on the son's gravestone [12] (photo 5). This friendship with P.I. Tchaikovsky, apparently, became possible because Sofya Aleksandrovna, the wife of N.V. Sklifosovsky, before her marriage she was a pianist, a diploma winner at an international competition held at the Vienna Conservatory, but gave up her career for the sake of her family. Indeed, very bitter and tragic moments in the life of their family are connected with this estate at the Sklifosovskys: the suicide of their son Vladimir, the death of Nikolai Vasilyevich Sklifosovsky, the brutal murder of his wife Sofya Aleksandrovna and daughter Tamara. In Yakovtsy, on the border with the Poltava field, there are graves of N.V. Sklifosovsky and his son Vladimir (photo 6).

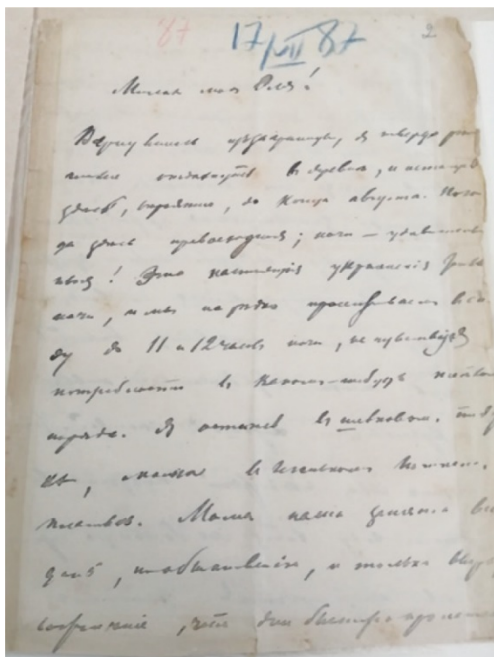


Photo 4. 1st page of N.V. Sklifosovsky's letter to his daughter Olga



Photo 5. The grave of N.V. Sklifosovsky's son Vladimir (gift of Prof. N.G. Boyko, Poltava)



Photo 6. Graves of N.V. Sklifosovsky and his son in Poltava <http://monuments.top/mogila-n-v-sklifosovskogo-v-poltave/>



So surprisingly, through the centuries, only history can connect the names of people on the field of the Battle of Poltava: its participant, associate of Peter I, Field Marshal Boris Sheremetev, according to whose understanding his grandson Nikolai Sheremetev built a "stone hospital" in Moscow on the Cherkasy gardens, which was soon named Hospice House (historical building of the Research Institute of Emergency Medicine), and the doctor Nikolai Sklifosovsky, whose name this majestic building bears today (photo 7).

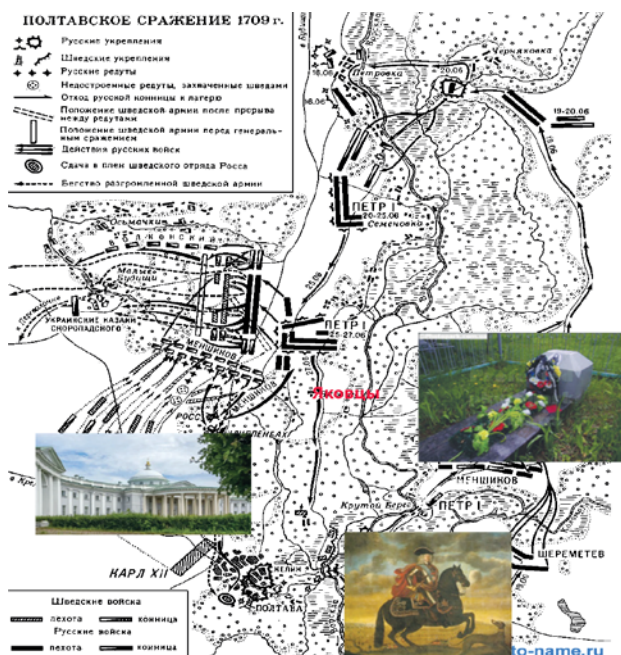


Photo 7. Scheme of the location of Russian and Swedish troops during the battle of Poltava and the location of the Yakovtsev estate

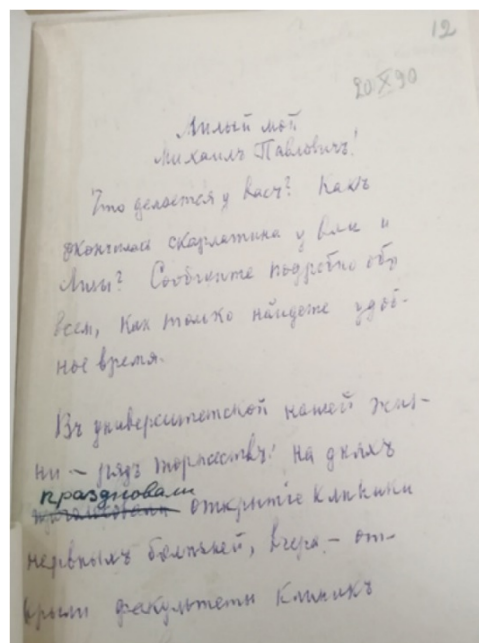


Photo 8. 1st page of N.V. Sklifosovsky's letter to M.P. Yakovlev

The second letter addressed to Mikhail Pavlovich Yakovlev was written by N.V. Sklifosovsky October 20, 1890. It contains 4 handwritten pages of text and is dedicated to the opening of a medical quarter on Devichye Pole (photo 8). The letter begins with a warm greeting and a question about the course of diphtheria in Olga and her granddaughter Liza. From the letter it becomes known that the Clinic for Nervous Diseases was opened, and "the other day faculty and surgical clinics", Institutes of General Pathology, Pharmacology and Hygiene. On the site of the Devichye Pole, as Nikolai Vasilievich writes, a clinical quarter has really grown with fences, paths, and trees will soon appear. Patients were admitted to his clinic. He gives a very high assessment of the feasibility and quality of all facilities, their convenience for teaching students. He writes that the forced vacation is over, but he is confident that students will be able to quickly make up for lost time, as the buildings built and equipped for them will improve the learning process and increase students' interest in learning.

It's time for N.V. Sklifosovsky was a period of active organizational work on the construction of a quarter on the Devichye Pole and intense pedagogical activity. He began his introductory lecture at the university with the words of A.S. Pushkin "We must not retreat in the field of the mind" and emphasized that in the arena of identity, self-knowledge and amateur performance, only those people who know how to appreciate their public figures and value the legacy they bequeathed acquire their share [13]. In 1882 he was elected dean of the Medical Faculty of Moscow University. In a very short time, within 6 years (1885-1890), with the most active participation of N.V. Sklifosovsky, the main clinics were built taking into account the most modern requirements. This medical quarter, with 15 clinics, became one of the largest and exemplary scientific medical centers in Europe at that time. In more detail this period of life and activity of N.V. Sklifosovsky is described in the journal History of Medicine [4]. It is surprising that such the most important episode in the biography of N.V. Sklifosovsky, which demanded from him a huge creative, mental and physical effort, for many years was not significantly noted in society. This is one of the mysteries of history. To the 180th anniversary of N.V. Sklifosovsky in 2016, the Kultura TV channel in the series Geniuses and Villains showed a specially made film about the life and work of N.V. Sklifosovsky. The film also raised these questions. And only on October 12, 2018 in Moscow on Bolshaya Pirogovskaya Street, at the initiative of the staff of the I.M. Sechenov Moscow Medical Academy, a monument was unveiled to the outstanding surgeon, teacher, public figure and patriot N.V. Sklifosovsky. Why, after all, the Sechenov Academy, and not Sklifosovsky? The Faculty of Medicine of the Imperial Moscow University, which in 1918 became a faculty of the 1st Moscow State University, was separated into an independent structure only in 1930 and became the 1st Moscow State Medical Institute. By his 200th

birthday in 1955, it received the name of Ivan Sechenov, and not Nikolai Sklifosovsky, since by that time the Research Institute of Emergency Medicine had already carried his name since 1923. But history took its next turn, and in 2019, as part of the I.M. Sechenov First Moscow State Medical University named appeared Institute of Clinical Medicine of N.V. Sklifosovsky, who united the medical departments of the university. A number of its departments are located in the medical quarter on the Devichye Pole, in which creation N.V. invested so much effort, soul and talent. Sklifosovsky.

At the end of the letter, Nikolai Vasilyevich shares with his son-in-law news about the health of family members and, above all, about the health of his wife Sofya Aleksandrovna. He describes in professional detail her condition after suffering severe follicular tonsillitis, speaks of her poor health and slow recovery. And not a word about the hard feelings of his wife about the death of a child. 16-year-old son Konstantin dies of tuberculosis of the kidneys. The grief of the parents, and above all of the mother, was immeasurable. She raised seven children (three from Sklifosovsky's first wife who died in her youth and four of her own), she had a warm, trusting relationship with all the children, she devoted her fate to the family. Sofya Aleksandrovna, who was with her husband at the Shipka theater of operations, helped him as an operating sister. The selflessness and devotion of this woman to her family and husband is admirable. The warmth and care of Sklifosovsky for the health of his wife, which permeate many lines of this letter, are understandable. It ends with greetings to daughter Olya.

N.V. Sklifosovsky had his own emblem. He was approved in Tsarskoye Selo on October 25, 1895 during his work in St. Petersburg as director of the Institute for the Improvement of Doctors. On the emblem of the Privy Councilor Professor Nikolai Sklifosovsky there is a tree (an idol-worshipping oak with a star with six rays). The emblem also bears the inscription "Knowledge is power". Oak, personifying constancy and strength, as well as a hexagon speak of belonging to the symbols of the Prussian kings [14] (photo 9).



Photo 9. N.V Sklifosovsky's emblem

Posthumous glory of N.V. Sklifosovsky lives today. The Institute for Emergency Medicine in Moscow has been named after N.V. Sklifosovsky. For more than 11 years, the scientific and practical journal of N.V. Sklifosovsky "Emergency medical care" has been published. This is the Institute of Clinical Medicine of the I.M. Sechenov First Moscow State Medical University, also named after him.

Two monuments were erected to Sklifosovsky's memory, near the regional Poltava hospital and, as mentioned above, on Bolshaya Pirogovskaya Street in Moscow (photo 10). By the anniversaries in the USSR and Moldova, there were postage stamps dedicated to N.V. Sklifosovsky [15] (photo 11).



Photo 10. The monument of N.V. Sklifosovsky on B. Pirogovskaya street in Moscow



Photo 11. Stamps depicting N.V. Sklifosovsky

The grandson of Olga Nikolayevna Sklifosovskaya-Yakovleva, great-grandson of N.V. Sklifosovsky Leon Birkett, British citizen, oceanologist, visited the Institute of N.V. Sklifosovsky in 1975. Here is his photograph against the background of a portrait of his great-grandfather (photo 12).

There is a monumental, large posthumous portrait of Sklifosovsky at the Institute, painted in oil, dated 1947. The author is Evgeny Vasilyevich Kudryavtsev, a portrait and landscape painter, a member of the Union of Artists of the USSR (died in 1949). It was not possible to find out who commissioned this portrait and how it got to the Institute. It is quite possible that this was the initiative of S.S. Yudin. Today, a portrait of N.V. Sklifosovsky is located on the 2nd floor of the 4th building of the Institute (doctoral building of the Hospice) (photo 13).

As a result of the research work carried out, two new historical documents from the Poltava Regional Archive were introduced into scientific circulation for the first time: lifetime letters of N.V. Sklifosovsky's daughter Olga Sklifosovskaya-Yakovleva and his closest student, surgeon Mikhail Pavlovich Yakovlev. The first letter from daughter Olga allows shedding light on their intra-family relationship, explains the changes in the name of their family estate after the tragic events in the life of their family.

The letter addressed to M.P. Yakovlev, provides us with facts about the construction and opening of the medical quarter on Devichye Pole, which specify the dates of commissioning of its buildings, note the high quality of facilities that create convenience for the education of medical students, as well as contribute to the optimization of the educational process.

From the Internet resource there is a photograph of the emblem of the Privy Councilor Nikolai Sklifosovsky, rare data on the timing of its approval and explanations for the symbols depicted on it. The readers are offered photographs of the painting by A. Sidorov, painted in oil and located in Vinnitsa, which depicts the arrival of N.V. Sklifosovsky to Vishnya, the estate of N.I. Pirogov, as well as a photograph of the gravestone of the son of N.V. Sklifosovsky Vladimir with the first bars of P.I. Tchaikovsky.

For the first time in the scientific press, photographs of a large, full-length portrait of N.V. Sklifosovsky by the artist E.V. Kudryavtsev, dated 1947, as well as a photograph of N.V. Sklifosovsky Leon Birkett at this portrait.

We hope that this study will expand and preserve the historical memory of N.V. Sklifosovsky, an outstanding scientist, doctor, teacher and public figure.

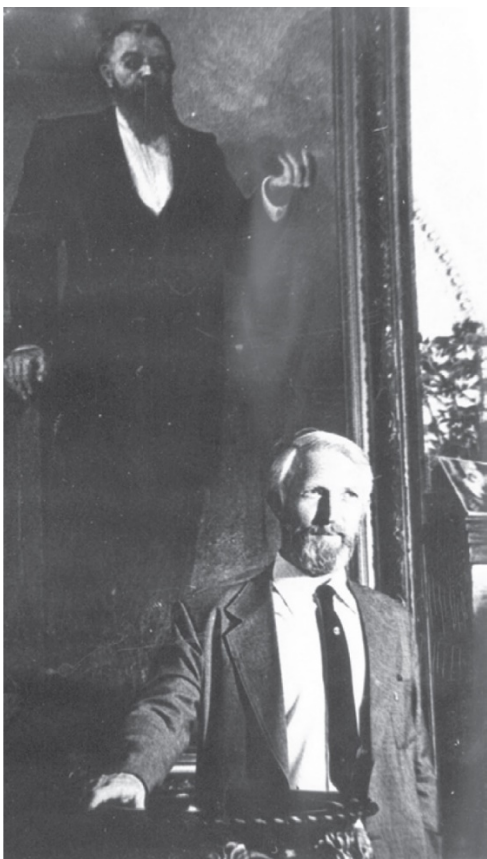


Photo 12. Leon Birkett, great-grandson of N.V. Sklifosovsky (1975) (property of N.V. Sklifosovsky Research Institute for Emergency Medicine)



Photo 13. The portrait of N.V. Sklifosovsky. Oil on canvas, 1947. E.V. Kudryavtsev, member of the Artists' Union of the USSR (property of N.V. Sklifosovsky Research Institute for Emergency Medicine)

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