

NARÓD



POLSKI



General Casimir Pulaski (1748-1779)
Father of the American Cavalry

The State of Illinois enacted a law on June 20, 1977 recognizing the first Monday in March as a day to celebrate the birthday of General Casimir Pulaski. The Bill was sponsored by Senator Leroy W. Lemke

(D- Chicago), and the first official Pulaski Day celebration was held in 1978. It is a day off for Chicago Public School children as well as City of Chicago and Cook County workers. Other school

"I came here, where freedom is being defended, to serve it, and to live and die for it." - Casimir Pulaski in a letter to General George Washington

WHY POLONIA HONORS GEN. PULASKI

districts throughout Illinois also recognize the day, which honors the Polish-born Brigadier General Casimir Pulaski, a famed cavalry officer in Poland and a hero of the American Revolutionary War.

Across the entire continent of the USA, monuments and buildings are dedicated to this great hero, such as Fort Pulaski in GA. Big cities, like New York and Philadelphia, hold Pulaski Day Parades - although they are held in October, the month when Pulaski died. Indiana and other states also mark Pulaski's birthday as a commemorative day by governor's proclamation and

Grand Rapids, MI celebrates Pulaski Days for an entire weekend.

Why does Polonia make such a big fuss about General Pulaski? There are two reasons: 1) General Pulaski, and others like him, valiantly fought in the American Revolution, so that we can enjoy the freedom we have today, and 2) he paid the ultimate price for our freedom by sacrificing his own young life. Gen. Pulaski was only 32 years old when he died.

A member of the Polish landed nobility, Count Casimir Pulaski was born in Warka, Poland. He received a military education while in the service of Duke

Charles of Courland. At the age of 19, he joined his father, Joseph - a partisan military leader - as a founder of the Bar Confederation. They fought many bloody battles against Russian domination of Poland. Upon his father's death in 1769, he carried on as military commander. He and his men took *Jasna Gora* in Czestochowa from the Russians and held it. This is the site of the Black Madonna icon and Poland's holiest place. News of his spectacular defense spread throughout Europe. However, the uprising failed. Pulaski's ancestral lands were confiscated and he was exiled. (Cont. on page 3)

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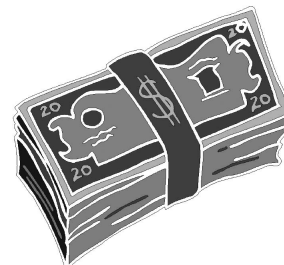
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(Continued from page 1) He went to Paris, France in 1775, where he met Benjamin Franklin, who encouraged him to join the American War of Independence. Pulaski came to America in March, 1777. He joined George Washington's Army prior to the Battle of Brandywine, during which he led a daring charge against the British, who were about to cut off the Americans' line of retreat. Having proven his military skill on the battlefield, Washington recommended that Pulaski be commissioned as a brigadier-general and placed in charge of the cavalry. He took part in the Battle of Germantown, and in the winter of 1777-78 helped defeat a British division at Haddonfield, NJ.

American cavalry officers refused to take orders from a foreigner who could barely speak English, therefore Pulaski resigned his command in March, 1778, and returned to Valley Forge. Upon his suggestion, Congress authorized the formation of a Corps of 350 lancers and light infantry, known as "Pulaski's Legion". Thus, Pulaski became known as the *Father of the American Cavalry*. In the autumn, the Legion was ordered to Little Egg Harbor where they repelled a British attack. They wintered in Minisink, NJ. In the Spring, they were ordered to South Carolina and entered Charleston on May 8, 1779. The city was being held by 900 British soldiers. Pulaski made an assault that was repelled. The governor wanted to surrender, but Pulaski held the city until reinforcements arrived on May 13. The British retreated and Pulaski harassed them until they evacuated the state.

In September, Pulaski was ordered to move toward Savannah. He captured an outpost, and, after several skirmishes, established communications with the French fleet at Beaufort. He rendered great services during the siege of Savannah. In the assault on October 9th, he commanded the whole cavalry, both French and American. Toward the close of the action, he was wounded with grapeshot in the upper right thigh, and was taken to the U.S. brig *Wasp*. Without regaining consciousness, he died aboard the ship.

For years, it was thought that Pulaski's remains were buried at sea. However, in 1996, when the monument was being refurbished, workers discovered a rusted metal box in the base of the monument containing human remains: bones, a skull and 2 molars. On top of the box was a silver plate engraved, "Brigadier General Cassimer [sic] Pulaski." City authorities took possession of the remains and began an investigation. Dr. James Metts, Jr., Chatham County Coroner, headed the investigation, assisted by Dr. Karen Burns, a forensic anthropologist from the University of Georgia at Athens.

Also, thanks to research efforts of Edward Pinkowski, a Polonian historian who extensively researched the life of Pulaski, many new details of the General's life came to light. According to Pinkowski, the captain of the brig *Wasp*, Samuel Bulfinch, wrote to Gen. Benjamin Lincoln on October 15, 1779, reporting that after the assault on Savannah, he had taken on board some American wounded, including Pulaski and Captain Bentalou, at a local plantation and that later "one of them died". According to Bulfinch's account, Pulaski was buried on the grounds of the plantation on property owned by the Bowen Family.

Within 10 years of Pulaski's death, the citizens of Savannah passed a proposal to honor General Pulaski with a monument at Monterey Square in Savannah. In 1824, Gen. Lafayette - who knew Casimir Pulaski - was asked to lay the cornerstone of the monument during his visit to the U.S. According to local legend, in 1852, when the construction of the monument was underway a member of the Bowen family exhumed Pulaski's remains and had them interred in the base of the monument. By 1854, the City of Savannah finally dedicated the monument in Monterey Square to Pulaski's memory.

In 1998, permission was obtained to exhume the remains of a grandniece of Pulaski who had been buried in Poland in 1834, in the hopes of comparing DNA samples. Adequate material was found and comparative studies were conducted by Dr. Burns, resulting in a 90% probability that the remains were those of General Pulaski. Forensic evidence provided further evidence that they were most likely those of Pulaski. The fingers of the right hand showed evidence of multiple healed fractures, as did the tailbone of the spine. Both injuries are typical of one who was a horseman for most of their life. The shape of the skull also conforms to facial features portrayed in a contemporary portrait of Pulaski which is displayed at his family home (now a museum) in Warka, Poland.

On October 9th, 2004, General Casimir Pulaski was finally given the hero's burial that he so richly deserved. Dignitaries of Polish American communities from across the nation and leaders of Poland and Georgia, gathered in Savannah. Events leading up to his funeral started a week before the official ceremonies on October 9th. During that time, Pulaski's remains - enclosed in a hand-carved white-oak casket that was brought from Poland - made a tour of Savannah's houses of worship.

At the Catholic Cathedral, a Memorial Mass was held. The General's casket was placed on a catafalque on the steps of the Cathedral, where it remained during the Mass, guarded by U.S. sailors in white uniforms. Bishop Ploski of Poland was the chief celebrant. A huge funeral procession was held from the church to Monterey Square. Participating in the procession were the U.S. Army Color Guard, an Infantry Unit, members of the U.S. Navy from the USS Roosevelt, Knights of Columbus, Pulaski Cadets, five Polish riders on horseback, many Polish veterans, as well as dignitaries of Polonia and the U.S.A.

After Mass, the congregation followed the Bishop into the street and joined ranks with the units outside to walk the 22 blocks to the Pulaski Monument, a 55-foot high Italian marble monument with a panel depicting a soldier, wounded in battle, falling off his horse. Four white draft horses pulled the caisson that held Pulaski's casket. A riderless horse followed, representing the fallen General. At the monument, Bishop Ploski performed the ceremony of Christian Burial. He was assisted by an Anglican Priest, a member of the Savannah Masonic Lodge and a Rabbi. When the casket had been lowered into the crypt, a twenty-one-gun salute was fired and buglers played "Taps." Finally General Pulaski was laid to rest, at the foot of the Pulaski Monument in Montgomery Square, Savannah, GA.

In testimony to Pulaski's loyalty, John Stevens wrote in 1825: "...the brave Pulaski who despairing of the cause of liberty in his own country had...sacrificed his life while contending for the freedom of ours..." Thus it is proper to honor this remarkable hero.