



Tadeusz Kosciuszko

# Tadeusz Kosciuszko (1746-1817)

Born in 1746 into a family of Polish gentry, Tadeusz Kosciuszko was tutored in mathematics, drawing, and French. He spent 3 years at the Royal School for cadets at Warsaw, where he earned the rank of captain. He spent the next 5 years in France, studying engineering and military science. When he returned to Poland in 1774, there were no jobs for someone with his talents, so he borrowed money from his family's estate and went to Dresden, Germany. Reports of the American Revolution and their need for military officers fired his imagination. He booked passage on a ship to Philadelphia and arrived there in August, 1776.

Kosciuszko offered his services to the Continental Congress. They gave him the rank of colonel, and put him in charge of defending Philadelphia against a British naval attack. He strengthened the Delaware River, erected Fort Mercer and placed a fence of pointed wooden stakes in the river to force the British ships into canals where they could be easily bombed.

Kosciuszko was then ordered to plan the defense of Fort Ticonderoga in New York. Much of his advice was ignored by higher ranking officers, but he taught retreating troops to cut down trees and flood fields to slow down their attackers. This gave the rebels enough time to prepare for the first major American victory of the war. At Saratoga, Kosciuszko fortified Bemis Heights over the Hudson River. As a result of his work, the British were defeated at the Battle of Saratoga in October 1777. This battle was the turning-point of the Revolutionary War.

Next, he was appointed Chief Engineer in charge of protecting the Hudson River and West Point. He built Fort Putnam and a chain of smaller forts that changed the wilderness into a defensive stronghold. His clever defenses gave a clear view of the river so the Continental Army could fire canons at British ships in the river. But his most useful invention was the "Great Chain" of iron that was hidden under the water and pulled tight when an enemy ship came near. It trapped the ship between two chains and then the rebels could attack.

Kosciuszko left West Point in August, 1780 and served during the rest of the war under General Greene in the South. In 1783, he was promoted to Brigadier General and admitted to the Order of the Cincinnati - an organization started in 1783 to preserve the ideals and friendship of the Revolutionary War officers and to pressure the government to honor the promises it had made to the officers who fought for American freedom from England.

To Tadeusz Kosciuszko, the principles expressed in the Declaration of Independence were a way of life. Thomas Jefferson, its author and Kosciuszko's close friend, called Kosciuszko "the purest son of liberty...that I have ever known, the kind of liberty which extends to all, not only to the rich." Throughout his life, Kosciuszko directed all his energy and money to the cause of freedom in America, and in Poland. This is why he was called the "Son of Liberty." (Continued)

In 1784, Kosciuszko returned to Poland where he was called upon to lead the Polish Army in several battles to free Poland from Russian control. After several victories, in October, 1794, the Polish forces suffered a defeat at Maciejowice. Kosciuszko was badly wounded in the field and he was taken prisoner by the Russians. He was a prisoner until 1796. After his release, Kosciuszko was forced to leave Poland forever.

He returned to the United States in 1797-1798 and visited Thomas Jefferson and other Revolutionary War friends. For a time, he lived in Philadelphia, PA. The house in which he lived in Philadelphia is now the Kosciuszko House Museum; it is recognized as a national monument.

Congress granted Kosciuszko \$15,000 in back pay for his wartime service and gave him a land grant of 500 acres in Ohio. Kosciuszko's time spent in the American South made him aware of the cruelty of slavery. As a man who valued freedom - for everyone - more than anything else, he wanted to do whatever he could to help the slaves. Before he returned to Europe in 1798 he drew up his last will and appointed Thomas Jefferson as his executor. He directed Jefferson to sell his land in Ohio and use that money to buy and free slaves and provide for their education.

Because Thomas Jefferson was himself a slave owner, he did not follow the orders given by Kosciuszko in his last will. But after Kosciuszko's death, this land was sold and the money was used to start a school for African Americans in Newark, New Jersey.

Kosciuszko died in Switzerland in 1817. His body was moved to Poland and laid to rest in the royal crypt at Wawel Castle. Even today, Tadeusz Kosciuszko is called a hero of two countries: the United States of America and Poland.

**PRCUA'S 2011 OCTOBER - POLISH AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH**  
**COLORING CONTEST**

**265th Anniversary of the Birth of Tadeusz Kosciuszko**

Contest is for PRCUA members. Only use crayons, pencils, markers or paint (no fabric, sequins, or glitter, etc.)

Age categories: 3 to 5 years; 6 to 8 years; 9 to 11 years, 12 to 15 years and 16 to 18 years.

First and second prizes will be awarded in each age category. Prizes will consist of age-appropriate gifts and a certificate. Deadline: Coloring page must be received at the Home Office by Tuesday, November 1, 2011. **Please Print**

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If you attend a PRCUA dance or language school, which one? \_\_\_\_\_

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