



Clemson University



NPS/TERRY ADAMS

General Thaddeus Kosciuszko Statue Lafayette Park, Washington, D.C.

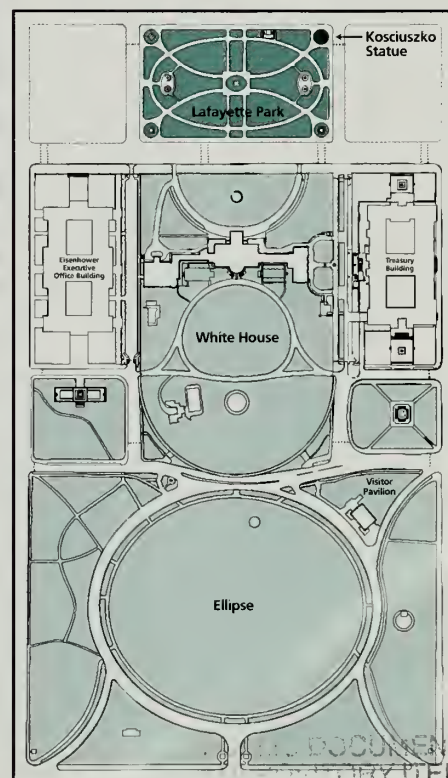
The statue of Thaddeus Kosciuszko stands at the northeast corner of Lafayette Park in Washington, D.C. The statue, a gift to the United States from Polish Americans under the leadership of the Polish National Alliance, was executed by Polish sculptor Antoni Popiel and dedicated on May 11, 1910. Kosciuszko was a young Polish military engineer officer who served during the American Revolution. His engineering feats helped ensure the Continental army's victory at

the Battle of Saratoga, thereby turning the tide of the war by bringing France into the conflict on the American side. His later engineering works on the defenses at West Point were so extensive, they effectively persuaded the British to abandon any attempt to invade the Hudson River Valley. After the revolution, Kosciuszko returned to his native Poland, and alive with Enlightenment ideals valiantly fought to gain independence for his homeland. Considered a hero on two continents, the

President's Park Notes

Statues

Number 6



Site plan of President's Park indicating the location of the Kosciuszko Statue in Lafayette Park. NPS

“George Washington” of Poland spent the remainder of his life advocating equality and fighting for freedom in his native land.

The Statue and Its Context

At the turn of the 20th century, Polish Americans focused intense interest on the exploits of heroic Poles like Kosciuszko, whose achievements symbolized a national heritage worth saving. Movements evolved to erect statues and monuments to Kosciuszko to coincide with the centennial of the May 3, 1791, Polish Constitution, Europe’s first modern constitution. In 1894, Polish Americans throughout the United States celebrated “the Year of Kosciuszko” marking his return to Poland and great victory over the Russian army at Raclawice in 1794. This enthusiasm motivated Polish Americans to erect a statue in Washington, D.C.

Lafayette Park, where the Kosciuszko statue stands, is approximately seven acres directly across from the White House on the north side of Pennsylvania Avenue. By the early 20th century, Lafayette Park had evolved into a welcoming public space with statues of foreign-born American Revolutionary War heroes, which surround the heroic equestrian bronze of Andrew Jackson (1853) at the park’s center commemorating his victory at New Orleans during the War of 1812. In 1891, a statue to General Marquis de Lafayette was dedicated at the southeast corner. This was followed by the statues to General Comte de Rochambeau (1902) at the southwest corner, General Thaddeus Kosciuszko (1910) at the northeast corner, and General Baron von Steuben (1910) at the northwest corner.

Throughout its history, Lafayette Park has enjoyed the attention of some of America’s most well known architects and landscape architects, including Charles Bulfinch and Andrew Jackson Downing. During the late 19th century Lafayette Park derived its organization and classical order from the City Beautiful Movement, which created grassroots enthusiasm for ordered city planning and classically inspired spaces. This enthusiasm for classical urban design and the desire to memorialize great national heroes, intersected fortuitously at the turn of the 20th century, particularly for Polish Americans.

Thaddeus Kosciuszko

Andrzej Tadeusz Bonawentura Kościuszko—Thaddeus Kosciuszko (1746–1817)—was born in Merezowszczyzna, in present-day Belarus, on February 12, 1746. Of Polish and Lithuanian descent, Kosciuszko was greatly impressed by stories from antiquity, particularly the Corinthian hero Timoleon, who freed his native land from tyrannical oppression.

In 1765, 19-year-old Kosciuszko enrolled in the newly created Royal Military Academy. Upon graduation he was commissioned a first lieutenant and assigned as an instructor at the academy where he remained until 1768. A year later, he was promoted to captain of artillery and awarded a scholarship by Poland’s King Poniatowski to continue engineering studies in France.

As a foreigner in France, Kosciuszko was not permitted to enroll at the prestigious military academies. Instead he studied at the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture and hired private tutors for military-related disciplines such as mathematics and military engineering. It is also very likely that he absorbed the writings of Enlightenment philosophers, who for Kosciuszko illustrated the inequality and injustices endured by the European peasantry and enslaved African Americans.

In 1772 while Kosciuszko was still in Paris, Poland suffered the first of its three partitions by Austria, Prussia, and Russia. With his financial resources dwindling, Kosciuszko returned to his family estate in Siechnowicze. He supported himself by teaching the daughters of Jozef Sosnowski, one of the richest noblemen in the region. Kosciuszko eventually fell in love with the youngest daughter, Louisa. The couple planned an ill-conceived elopement that was discovered by Louisa’s father. Under a threat of prosecution, the 29-year-old Kosciuszko fled Poland in 1775. Less than a year later, he set sail for America.

Kosciuszko arrived in Philadelphia by late summer 1776, where he presented his credentials to the Continental Congress

on August 30. Kosciuszko, waiting in Philadelphia for a reply from the Congress, made his services available to the city, which was desperately working to fortify itself in anticipation of a British assault. He eventually gained employment with the Pennsylvania Committee of Defense to develop and execute plans for building fortifications along the Delaware River. More importantly, because the Continental Congress had approved the project, Kosciuszko’s name came



Thaddeus Kosciuszko by Julian Rys after an unidentified source, 1897. INDEPENDENCE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

before the Congress. On October 18, the Congress appointed him a colonel of engineers in the Continental army.

Around this time, Kosciuszko developed a warm and advantageous friendship with General Horatio Gates, then in command of Philadelphia in February 1777. In March, Gates was ordered north to take command of the northern campaigns and Fort Ticonderoga; and accompanying him was his new engineer, Kosciuszko. In New York, he displayed his greatest talents as a military engineer. Reeling from the humiliating defeat at Fort Ticonderoga on July 5, Continental forces under Kosciuszko’s leadership undertook delaying tactics to impede British General John Burgoyne’s advance. On July 16, General Philip Schuyler dispatched him to oversee delaying actions and placed 1,000 men under his

command. Kosciuszko's success in delaying the British advance gave Gates valuable time to replenish his depleted army.

Kosciuszko went forward immediately to survey the surrounding countryside. Bridges were destroyed, trees felled, and land flooded creating an impassable quagmire. Large boulders were rolled into larger waterways making it difficult for the British to navigate, while also causing overflows that immersed surrounding lands. Ditches were dug to lower water levels in otherwise navigable streams, while diverting water made surrounding lowlands impassable. Livestock were driven away and grain fields burned to deny the British much-needed provisions. Kosciuszko's tactics reduced the British advance to an average of only one mile per day, in sharp contrast to previous movements by Burgoyne's army that had traveled as much as 18 miles per day.

Capitalizing on the time bought through Kosciuszko's delaying tactics, Schuyler and the Continental army retreated farther south through Saratoga then 12 miles south to Stillwater. On August 19, 1777, Gates replaced Schuyler at Schaick's Island and ordered Kosciuszko north to select a spot on the west bank of the Hudson River to establish a defensive position. He selected an area six miles above Stillwater. With guns placed on the crest of a wooded hill, named Bemis Heights, he could command the road along the Hudson River Valley leading to Albany. Gates ordered 1,000 men forward to execute Kosciuszko's plan, which included mile-long entrenchments made of earth, logs, and fence rails fronted by an abatis or obstacle created by placing felled trees in a way that the branches are intertwined and tangled. Behind the first line, Kosciuszko constructed a second more formidable line at a road junction just south of Bemis Heights, and along the heights constructed gun emplacements to cover the lowlands. When completed, the Hudson River effectively guarded the American right flank.

On the eastern side of the heights, Kosciuszko similarly constructed fieldworks that followed the natural contours of the land. Many of his emplacements took advantage of the natural outline of the landscape or were hidden behind stands of trees and forests, thus concealing exactly where the American defenses lay, which proved a decisive factor in

Burgoyne's eventual defeat at the Battle of Saratoga in September and October 1777—a pivotal event in the Revolutionary War. After these victories, France was persuaded to enter the conflict on the American side. Kosciuszko's feats of engineering are credited in large measure for making the victory possible.

By the time the news of France's entry into the war reached the troops, Kosciuszko was again at work constructing new defenses at West Point along the Hudson River. North of New York City about 45 miles, the Hudson River narrows, the channel turns through a tight S-curve, and the highlands rise on either side providing a natural defensive barrier between Albany and New York City.

The Hudson River Valley was important and the Continental Congress recognized as early as 1775 the strategic and defensive importance of West Point. General George Washington, commander of the Continental army, in a letter to General Israel Putnam in December 1777 urged Putnam to use all means at his disposal to secure the river against any possible attacks.

Kosciuszko arrived at West Point in March 1778, and immediately began the task of building defenses, which had languished under his predecessor. He moved quickly to fortify both the river and the surrounding high ground against a possible land assault. The focus of this effort was Fort Putnam, which from a rocky hill overlooked the plain below and the West Point prominence. Additional priorities included completing Fort Arnold; raising obstructions to river traffic; finishing outer works; erecting barracks; and constructing water batteries, abatis, and defensive obstacles of spikes attached to wooden frames, especially against cavalry, known as *chevaux-de-frise* to support Fort Putnam. Once these priorities were accomplished Kosciuszko would go on to plan and execute additional fortifications that when completed would comprise one expansive interlocking defensive unit.

In the summer of 1778, renewed fears of an attack accelerated the work at West Point. In July, Washington traveled to West Point for an inspection in the company of Kosciuszko. Washington's purpose for this brief visit was to personally assure himself that this "most important post in America" was secure. It is believed this

is the first time the two actually met in person, and although no official report exists, Washington's subsequent correspondence indicated his satisfaction with the fortification's progress. Washington transferred his headquarters closer to West Point and ordered that all soldiers who were masons or skilled craftsmen be immediately transferred to Kosciuszko's detail. The garrison worked day and night to strengthen all approaches. These activities were closely monitored by British reconnaissance whose reports seem to indicate a growing British wariness over an assault on West Point.

By the end of 1778, Kosciuszko made considerable progress on the various defenses, supplementing them with fireboats, gunboats, chains, and any other possible obstacle to discourage attack. He often wrote to commanding officers complaining about the chronic shortage of manpower and requesting more supplies. Throughout the severe winter months of 1779–80, he urged his soldiers to keep pace despite unrelenting hunger, cold, and fatigue. Workers repaired the log boom and iron chain that laid across the Hudson River, erected new *chevaux-de-frise*, constructed bombproof magazines, and raised additional barracks and redoubts. To expedite the work, half a gallon of rum was promised for every approved log delivered to West Point above the daily requirement. He again attempted to ameliorate the suffering of his men. In a letter to Schuyler, now a member of Congress, Kosciuszko pleaded on behalf of the entire Corps of Engineers requesting clothing equal to what the rest of the army normally received. These requests were routinely unmet.

The greatest testimony of Kosciuszko's achievement was the fact that the British never made an attempt against West Point. British reconnaissance perceived the defensive works as virtually impregnable. Kosciuszko's densely fortified West Point—the Gibraltar of America—effectively denied the British use of the Hudson while protecting the grain supplies, which fed Washington's army. The novelty of design and the quality of workmanship was carried out under Kosciuszko's supervision illustrating a surprising degree of engineering sophistication that would not be seen in Europe until the 19th century. Had the British been able

freely to navigate the Hudson, the colonies would have been geographically divided and the French and American armies isolated, leaving the French clustered on Long Island. With West Point secured, the British were bottled up in New York making southward movements their only alternative.

Kosciuszko's West Point duties finally concluded after two years when Gates was transferred to the Continental army's southern campaign and personally requested Kosciuszko's services from Washington. In August 1780, Kosciuszko was named chief engineer of the southern army. He spent the next two years putting his engineering talents to use helping his troops dodge and engage the British in the Carolinas and Virginia.

At the conclusion of the war, Kosciuszko sailed to Philadelphia in June 1783 to settle matters with the Continental Congress before embarking on his return to Poland. One of these matters was his promotion, and the other concerned his pay. Unlike other officers during the war, Kosciuszko was modest to a fault, often eschewing personal advancement. At the conclusion of the war, Kosciuszko was promoted to the full rank of brigadier general and settled his compensation with the Congress in the amount of \$12,280.94 with six percent interest back dated to January 1, 1784. He also received 500 acres of land along the Scioto River in the Ohio Territory.

After returning to Poland, Kosciuszko returned to the family estate in Siechnowice. Although he was wealthy from his American pay, his financial situation remained difficult. Promised interest from his accounts did not arrive. It also became clear to Kosciuszko that while he was serving in America, Poland suffered economic and social stagnation under Russian rule.

By the late 1780s, debates raged within Poland over the Natural Law Philosophy, which found a steadfast supporter in Kosciuszko. Welcoming a fight for Poland's freedom, Kosciuszko accepted an appointment to the position of Major General of the Polish army. While he built his forces, the Polish parliament, or *Sejm*, adopted Europe's first constitution based on the principles of the Enlightenment, on May 3, 1791. As such, it aggravated Poland's monarchial neighbors and eventually

led to a second partition of Poland in 1793. The reforms made under the May 3 constitution were abolished and Poland fell under Russian and Prussian rule.

Kosciuszko, distraught, resigned his commission, left Poland and eventually landed in Austria. Authorities there feared he would foment rebellion and ordered him to leave the country. With Russian spies following, Kosciuszko made his way to Paris where the French Revolutionary government grandly announced its intent to support all democratic movements in Europe, but in the end offered him only "honorary French citizenship" and the title of "defender of the people against despots." In the summer of 1793 he returned to Leipzig and immersed himself in planning for a new Polish rebellion.

In March 1794, Kosciuszko returned to Poland intent on sparking a new revolt. On March 24 in Krakow, Kosciuszko appealed to the Polish nation to rise up against its occupiers. He issued his famous Act of Insurrection that was intended to clarify the revolt's purposes and create enthusiasm among the peasantry whose support was needed. The Act was based on the American Declaration of Independence and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man. He urged citizens to stand for their liberty, security, and property.

Kosciuszko was able to muster an army of only 32,000 regular and peasant militia. On the other hand, Russia deployed 29,000 troops in Poland after the partition with another 30,000 close by as reinforcements. Also in the area were 8,000 Prussians with another 14,000 en route. The odds were not in Kosciuszko's favor.

On April 4, 1794, 6,000 Polish regulars and peasant militia met 7,000 Russians troops at Raclawice just outside of Krakow. The Kosciuszko Uprising was underway. Kosciuszko personally led 350 scythe-wielding peasants against the center Russian line. The attackers were dressed in native dress and despite such irregular uniforms and improbable odds, broke the enemy line. News of the victory spread and incited successful revolts across Poland. Kosciuszko issued his Polaniec Manifesto on May 7, hoping to rouse more peasant support for the revolutionary cause. This historic but essentially futile document declared the peasantry free and granted them land ownership rights. In June 1794,

Prussian and Russian forces combined to defeat Kosciuszko at Szczekociny.

Kosciuszko was undeterred in his zeal to form an independent Polish state. Anticipating that Russian General Alexander Suvorov was moving to reinforce Russian forces around Warsaw, he launched an offensive against the Russians at Maciejowice on October 10, 1794. The Polish army was overwhelmed. He was gravely wounded and captured by the Russians, thus ending the Kosciuszko Uprising.

Although seriously wounded, on October 13 Kosciuszko began a long and painful journey to St. Petersburg as a prisoner of war. Along the route, the Russians displayed him in order to squelch rumors of his escape. He finally arrived in St. Petersburg on December 10 and was sent by Czarina Catherine II to the Peter and Paul Fortress as a political prisoner. While imprisoned, he was grieved once again as Poland underwent its third partition and was erased from the political map of Europe.

On November 6, 1796, Catherine II died unexpectedly bringing to the throne her son Czar Paul I. The czar was a reformer and admirer of Kosciuszko's liberal ideals, though not his political aspirations. In return for his solemn oath not to resume revolutionary activities, the czar released him. After two years of captivity Kosciuszko departed St. Petersburg on December 19, bound for England.

In England Kosciuszko was treated by King George III's private physician. He also received visitors and news of his old American compatriots, who encouraged him to return to the United States. Not only did he wish to see his old colleagues, he also hoped to collect on the debts still owed to him by the American government. On June 19, 1797, Kosciuszko boarded the *Adriana* bound for Philadelphia, where he was greeted by a hero's welcome upon his arrival.

In Philadelphia Kosciuszko received numerous visitors while he continued to convalesce from his wounds. Despite his agreement with the czar not to foment rebellion, he still longed for an independent Poland and held out hope for French assistance in this regard. Kosciuszko secretly met with French diplomatic representatives and would have returned immediately to resume his fight for Polish



America on the north face of the Kosciuszko Statue pedestal. NPS/TERRY ADAMS



Europe on the south face of the Kosciuszko Statue pedestal. NPS/TERRY ADAMS

independence if French assurances of support had been forthcoming. Unfortunately, these offers of support never materialized, but his contact with the French and Jeffersonian Republicans including Vice President Thomas Jefferson during a time of heightened political tensions in the United States hastened his departure.

In early 1798 relations between the United States and France became strained as the pro-British, Federalist-led government began to prepare for the possibility of war with France. Jefferson, desperate to quell the furor, enlisted Kosciuszko's help. Knowing of his desire to return to Europe, Jefferson believed Kosciuszko would be a perfect intermediary. While Jefferson made arrangements for the clandestine trip, he completed his own personal business, which included management of his American accounts and preparation of his final will and testament. With Jefferson's assistance, Kosciuszko executed his will on April 30.

The extraordinary provisions of Kosciuszko's will have been cited frequently as proof of his unflinching egalitarian convictions. In it, he names Jefferson as his executor and stipulates that Jefferson should use the proceeds of his estate to purchase the freedom of enslaved African Americans and then educate them to know the duty of a citizen in the free Government. With his

affairs now in order, Kosciuszko again departed the United States this time in great secrecy to attend to the diplomatic mission authorized by Jefferson.

The details of Kosciuszko's mission in France are understandably dim, given the secret nature of the task. History suggests that Kosciuszko's efforts were to good effect as tensions between the two nations eased considerably. This period marked a sustained level of correspondence between Kosciuszko and Jefferson. The fluctuating political tensions between the United States and France held their political talk to a minimum. But their close ideological bond as well as the fact that Jefferson was overseeing his finances kept them in frequent contact. When Jefferson became President in 1801, Kosciuszko considered a return trip to America. He was also increasingly disenchanted with Napoleonic France and its continuing reluctance to support the cause of Polish liberty. In 1800 while in France, Kosciuszko wrote a pamphlet calling for a popular Polish uprising, but French authorities suppressed the pamphlet and promptly placed him under police surveillance. Worn down by the constant monitoring, Kosciuszko accepted in 1801 the invitation of the Swiss minister to France, Peter Joseph Zeltner, to come to his estate at Berville near Fontainebleau, France.

For the next 14 years, Kosciuszko lived quietly at Zeltner's estate. He received guests regularly, including the Marquis de Lafayette and members of the American diplomatic mission, staying informed on American events and continually lamenting the plight of his native Poland. During this time he continued his correspondence with President Thomas Jefferson, who established the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1802 on the very fortress Kosciuszko secured during the American Revolution. He certainly would have approved of such an institution as many of his letters would attest. During Jefferson's presidency and West Point's nascent years, Kosciuszko's letters often expressed strong favor for military education as necessary to further the United States' hard-fought democratic ideals. Kosciuszko contributed a manual on artillery warfare. *Manoeuvres of Horse Artillery*, first written in French in 1800 and later translated into English in 1808, became one of the first texts ever used at West Point.

In 1815, Kosciuszko accepted the invitation of Zeltner's brother, Francis Xavier Zeltner, to reside with his family in Switzerland. He did his best to keep up with world events but time and battle wounds had taken a toll on his body. Perhaps aware that his life was waning, Kosciuszko executed another will in April 1817, leaving his familial estate at Siechnowice to his niece Katarzyna Estkowa and her children, stipulating that after his death the serfs on the estate were to be freed. Similar to his American will, he urged the freed serfs to educate their children to prepare them to be full-fledged citizens. In September, Kosciuszko wrote to Jefferson reminding him of the will he witnessed and "the solemn oath" they made. In early October, Kosciuszko executed a third will leaving his Swiss funds to the Zeltner family. Days later on October 15, 1817, the 71-year-old Kosciuszko died.

Many writers have cited Kosciuszko's wills and testaments as proof of his egalitarian ideals. Unfortunately, the fact that he executed three wills on two continents created a tangled web of probate and engendered a long-lasting myth regarding the establishment of a "Kosciuszko School" for African Americans in New Jersey. This in fact never came to pass despite Kosciuszko's fervent wish to free and empower enslaved African Americans.



Freedom group on the east face of the Kosciuszko Statue pedestal. NPS/TERRY ADAMS

Legislation and the Polish National Alliance

The development of the Kosciuszko statue in Lafayette Park was in fact intertwined with a statue to yet another Polish patriot, Casimir Pulaski. The two statues would eventually be dedicated in Washington on the same day in a lavish demonstration of Polish American pride. Pulaski, like Kosciuszko, came from Poland to fight in the American Revolution and is considered by many as “the Father of the American Cavalry.” Soon after Pulaski’s death in October 1779 from wounds sustained in battle, the Continental Congress issued a resolution pledging a monument to Pulaski. It was not until the early 20th century that the American Congress finally fulfilled this promise.

At the turn of the 20th century, the Polish National Alliance (PNA) was just one of the Polish fraternal societies that evolved concurrently with increasing Polish immigration to the United States. The PNA was founded in 1880 in Philadelphia under the leadership of Julian Lipinski, Julian Szajnert, and John Popielinski. These men proposed a new federation—*Zwiazek Narodowy Polski*—or Polish National Alliance to work for the preservation of ethnic consciousness and pride among Polish Americans. One

of their methods included memorializing heroic Poles such as Kosciuszko.

As early as 1888, Chicago Polish Americans organized to raise funds for an equestrian statue of Kosciuszko in the city’s Humboldt Park. The statue was finally dedicated on September 11, 1904, in the presence of more than 100,000 spectators. On May 7, 1905, the Cleveland Kosciuszko monument was dedicated before another impressive crowd, and on June 18, 1905, a crowd of 50,000 watched the unveiling of the Milwaukee Kosciuszko statue. This enthusiasm would spread to Washington, D.C., where the Pulaski statue with federally appropriated funds would finally get its due and in the process drive the PNA to offer the Kosciuszko statue as a gift to the United States.

Urged by various Polish American organizations in the Midwest, Representatives James H. Southard (Ohio) and Abraham Lincoln Brick (Indiana) introduced a bill in Congress in January 1901 to build and dedicate the statue to Pulaski first promised by the Continental Congress in 1779. A separate bill was laid before the Congress in May 1902 for an equestrian statue of Baron von Steuben, which coincided with the dedication of the Rochambeau statue. Eventually, these two separate legislative initiatives were combined into one bill that became law on February 27, 1903. The legislation authorized the creation of commissions for each statue, and it is within the records of the Pulaski and Von Steuben Statue Commissions that information is found regarding the Kosciuszko statue’s placement—an important detail that sheds light on why the final legislation for the Kosciuszko statue specifically provides for its placement in Lafayette Park.

The Kosciuszko statue’s development did not follow the regular legislative process that typically created memorials and statues at the turn of the

20th century. Normally, Congress would approve legislation both for the creation and funding of the statue. The Kosciuszko statue, however, was a gift to the United States, paid for with private funds and so did not require appropriating legislation. It did, however, require Congressional approval due to the fact that it would be erected on a public reservation which was under Congress’s jurisdiction.

As planning progressed for the Pulaski statue, which initially was proposed for Lafayette Park, a dilemma concerning its placement emerged. General Pulaski was a cavalry officer. Consequently Polish Americans were adamant that Pulaski be represented as an equestrian statue. However, the Federal government, which had jurisdiction and final say over the style and form of the statue, felt that an equestrian statue on any corner of Lafayette Park would be inappropriate. Freestanding pedestrian figures of Lafayette and Rochambeau with pedestal figures occupied the other two corners and an equestrian statue of Andrew Jackson was at the center of the park. The precedent for the corners had been established, and to create a harmonious setting, the two remaining spots would have to be occupied by similar figures. Since Pulaski could not occupy this site in a form that was acceptable to both the Polish American groups and the Federal government, Polish Americans proposed a



Bravery group on the west face of the Kosciuszko Statue pedestal. NPS/TERRY ADAMS

statue of Kosciuszko as a gift to the United States for this site. In turn, the government proposed, and Polish Americans agreed, to erect the Pulaski statue at a small triangular block on the north side of Pennsylvania Avenue between 13th and 14th Streets. In the 1970s Pennsylvania Avenue was redesigned, and the Pulaski statue and the triangle block where it stood were incorporated into the larger Freedom Plaza.

Acting on this plan, six men representing over 250,000 members from six different Polish American organizations sent an official letter on January 14, 1904, to President Theodore Roosevelt. The letter expressed a desire to present “to the United States a suitable statue of Thaddeus Kosciuszko” and that it be placed in Lafayette Park. The letter further stated this gift would serve “as a token of the loyalty and devotion felt by the Polish people of the United States for their adopted country and for the liberties of which, now so happily enjoyed by them, Kosciuszko so nobly fought.” The letter empowered Theodore M. Helinski, who was already the president of the Pulaski Monument Polish Central Committee to confer with President Roosevelt. Helinski, a Polish immigrant and secretary of the Polish National Alliance, led the effort to reconcile the placement of the Pulaski statue in concert with the new offer of the Kosciuszko statue.

Following the offer letter, on January 21, 1904, Minnesota Representative James T. McCleary introduced House Joint Resolution 84 (HJR 84) to accept the offer made by Polish American citizens. Two days later, Roosevelt sent a letter to Colonel Thomas Symons, superintendent of Public Buildings and Grounds, conveying his wish to comply with the Polish groups’ offer. Symons replied to the president that the “liberal and patriotic offer of the Polish Societies of America” could be accepted. Three days later on January 28, President Roosevelt sent to the Congress the letter from the Polish organizations along with Symons’ report. In his message to Congress, the President advised that the “very patriotic offer of the Polish organizations be accepted.” The resolution to accept the offer from Polish Americans for a statue of Kosciuszko to be placed at Lafayette Park passed and was ordered printed on April 18, 1904. Additional legislation

concerning the statue’s unveiling and site preparation was passed in 1910, providing \$3,500 for laying sod, asphalt walks, grading, adding soil as needed, granite coping for posts, and for coping around the monument. Of the \$3,500 requested, \$1,500 would be used for inspections and the unveiling ceremony in May 1910.

Operationally, the legislation accepting the gift of the Kosciuszko statue created a Federal commission for the statue comprised of the secretary of war, William Howard Taft (who would be president at the time of the unveiling in May 1910); the chairmen of the Committees on the Library of the Senate and House of Representatives, George P. Wetmore and James M. McCleary, respectively; private secretary to the secretary of war, Fred W. Carpenter; and superintendent of Public Buildings and Grounds, Colonel Charles S. Bromwell. A non-governmental central committee was also formed comprised of members of the Polish American organizations that signed the original January 1904 offer letter to Roosevelt.

The central committee, charged with the primary responsibility for execution of the statue, met immediately after the legislation was signed and began planning for the necessary fundraising. As plans progressed, the central committee encountered reluctance on the part of several organizations to move forward, due largely to the well-documented power struggles between Polish Catholic organizations and the more secular PNA. Eventually, a number of those who signed the original proposition for the gift withdrew their support, leaving the PNA to move forward alone. Polish American organizers in Chicago under the leadership of Helinski and the PNA finally convened their Washington, D.C., Kosciuszko Monument Central Committee comprised of T. M. Helinski, president; M.B. Steczynski, vice president; M. Durski, treasurer; S. T. Orpizewski, financial secretary; and J. M. Sienkiewicz, corresponding secretary.

In the early planning stages, two questions predominated the central committee’s deliberations. First, how to raise the necessary funds to pay for the design and casting of the bronzes for the statue and granite pedestal, and second how to conduct a design competition. Based on other statues at Lafayette Park, the committee



Kosciuszko bronze figure. NPS/TERRY ADAMS

estimated the cost for the Kosciuszko statue to be between \$35,000 and \$40,000.

Fundraising for the statue was conducted at all levels and included large individual contributions, community events, and “assessments.” At its 16th Congress in October 1905, the PNA imposed upon its members a “tax” of two cents per month. The PNA’s tax provided over \$75,000 of the nearly \$77,000 ultimately raised for the creation of the Kosciuszko statue. The final cost of the statue including associated administrative fees totaled approximately \$46,000.

The Kosciuszko Statue Competition and Antoni Popiel

The second major question that dominated the committee’s planning was how to conduct a design competition. The committee was uncertain as to the style of statue the Federal commission would find acceptable, and how exactly to proceed with a design competition. The committee was not interested in breaking new ground artistically, but rather wanted to provide the Federal commission with a work that would be acceptable. Consequently in announcing the competition, pictures of the Lafayette and Rochambeau statues were to be sent to the Polish newspapers, especially *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* in



Antoni Popiel's design submission model, 1906. (Source: Records of the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks in the National Capital, RG 42, National Archives and Records Administration.) NATIONAL ARCHIVES

By December 21, 1906, the models were in place at the Corcoran and ready for review. The commission appointed a judges' panel comprised of prominent American sculptors Lorado Taft, Henry M. Shrady, and Daniel Chester French, who for unknown reasons declined the appointment. The commission decided to move forward with only two judges, Taft and Shrady. Taft's credits in Washington, D.C., include *Columbus Fountain* (1912) at Union Station. Shrady is perhaps best known for his sculpture, the *Ulysses S. Grant Memorial* (1922), located at the foot of Capitol Hill. These two artists reviewed the models on January 3, 1907, and determined that the model by Stanislaw Lewandowski of Vienna showed the most merit, followed by the models by Antoni Popiel and

Warsaw to illustrate to prospective artists what would be an acceptable form for the statue. The final guidelines stipulated that the competition would be open only to Polish sculptors living anywhere in the world; the cost of the statue with pedestal would be limited to between \$35,000 and \$40,000; the height of the figure, pedestal, and base must be between 30 and 32 feet; and all models were to be submitted by December 1, 1906, to the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

The competition guidelines clearly placed a limit on an artist's interpretation of Kosciuszko since they stipulated that Kosciuszko must be represented standing, dressed in "the continental uniform of an American General, on a granite pedestal, about which are to be grouped appropriate allegorical figures." All the figures were to be cast in bronze and the pedestal would be made of "the best granite." Black granite was specifically prohibited. Prizes would be awarded for first place (\$1,000), second place (\$600), and third place (\$400), based upon the final approval of the Kosciuszko Statue Commission.

Julien Beltowski, both from Lviv in present-day Ukraine. Teofil Koszarek of Paris was awarded an "honorable mention."

The first place finisher, Stanislaw Lewandowski was a Polish sculptor who had studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. His winning design depicted the Polish hero in his general's uniform atop a lower group consisting of 13 allegorical figures representing liberation, progress, civilization, industry, and prosperity.

Beltowski's third place entry also showed Kosciuszko in his Continental army uniform. Allegorical singular forms surrounded the base and posed in an interesting arrangement of varying positions that drew the eye upward to the central figure. Koszarek's honorable mention submission was vertically

more linear with a thinner and taller pedestal. The central figure of Kosciuszko had less military bearing, and the surrounding base figures were all standing.

In a letter to the commission, the jury voiced concerns over whether Lewandowski's sculpture could be executed within the allotted budget. They also felt that "for artistic reasons the subordinate groups should be of stone" contrary to the competition guidelines, which stated subordinate figures must be in bronze. The judges then noted that if for some reason Lewandowski's model could not be executed, Popiel's submission "subject to slight modifications in its architecture" would be accepted.

The next day, January 4, 1907, the Federal commission consisting of Secretary of War Taft, Senator Wetmore, and Representative McCleary reviewed the models and awarded first place to the model by Antoni Popiel, as it was considered more suitable for placement at Lafayette Park than the model by Lewandowski. President Roosevelt also favored Popiel's submission over Lewandowski, although the reasons



Stanislaw Lewandowski's first place design model, 1906. (Source: Records of the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks in the National Capital, RG 42, National Archives and Records Administration.) NATIONAL ARCHIVES

for his choice are not apparent. The central committee accepted the judgment of the Federal commission, paid the artists their awards, and entered into an agreement with Antoni Popiel.

Antoni Popiel (1865–1910) is largely unknown in the world of American sculpture. He was born in Szczakowa, Poland, in 1865 and studied at the Krakow School of Fine Arts from 1882 to 1884 under the direction of Wladyslaw Luszczykiewicz, Izydor Jablonski, and Professor Walery Gadomski. He continued his work at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna from 1885 to 1888. His principal works in Poland are his monuments to Adam Mickiewicz (Lviv, Ukraine 1904; Krynica, Poland 1906). He also collaborated with his father-in-law, Leonardo Marconi, on a Kosciuszko statue at the entrance to Krakow's Wawel Castle. Other important works by Popiel include monuments to Polish Romantic writers Kornel Ujejski and Jozef Korzeniowski in Brody, Ukraine; a monument to Polish chemist Andrzej Sniadecki at Lwow University in Lwow, Poland; a Pieta group for a sepulchral chapel in Lancut, Poland; and decorative façade work for the Lviv (Ukraine) Theater of Opera and Ballet.

Soon after completing the Kosciuszko statue for Washington, D.C., in 1909, Popiel went back to Poland but returned in the spring of 1910 to assist with the design and placement of the granite pedestal. Already ill during this time, he returned to Poland and was unable to participate in the unveiling ceremonies in May. He died two months later in July at the age of 45.

Creating the Statue

Antoni Popiel submitted his model for the design competition while residing in Lviv, which is today in western Ukraine. He inscribed his competition design with the emblem *For Freedom in Both Hemispheres*. The figure of Kosciuszko is of an officer observing the fortification works. The group on the left side (east) represents *Freedom* and the group on the right side (west) is *Bravery*. At the front (north) of the statue is the hemisphere *America* with an eagle defending the flag and coat of arms. At the rear (south) of the statue is the hemisphere *Europe* and an eagle fighting with a snake.

After winning the contest, Popiel came to Chicago in September 1907,

where he established a temporary residence. A contract was entered into on October 29, 1907, between the artist and the Kosciuszko Monument Central Committee. The contract stipulated that Popiel would execute the statue, with side groups and emblems in clay and plaster and superintend the casting, erection, and placing of these on the pedestal in Lafayette Park. Popiel's compensation was set at \$17,000. The monument was to be completed and erected no later than April 15, 1910. By February 1908, 16 months after entering into the contract, Popiel had completed a full-scale model of the statue and subsidiary groups.

A few differences are visible between Popiel's competition model and the final design that now stands at Lafayette Park. The Continental soldier, grasping the flag and assisting the fallen figure, wears a tricornered hat. The soldier in the competition model wore no hat. In the second grouping, the Polish peasant soldier has one hand on the scythe and the other on the fallen soldier's shoulder; in the competition model, both hands held the scythe. These two figures on the final design also face the opposite direction from those on the model, their faces are now visible when viewing the front or north face of the statue. The central shaft depicting Kosciuszko also seems to have undergone some alteration, reflecting a more forceful, determined, and less *contrapposto* stance. The sword in his left hand is gripped more tightly than in the model, with the thumb engaged and pointing. His right leg standing on a cannon is likewise bearing more weight.

Once the final model was accepted, the next step was to actually cast the bronze central shaft and side groups and also to carve the granite pedestal. Jules Berchem, the owner and founder of American Art Bronze Foundry in Chicago, Illinois, was ultimately selected to cast the monument's bronzes. Besides the Kosciuszko statue and groupings in



Julien Beltkowski's third place design model, 1906. (Source: Records of the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks in the National Capital, RG 42, National Archives and Records Administration.) NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Lafayette Park, Berchem and American Art Foundry also cast the Kosciuszko monument in Chicago and the great lions at the entrance to the Art Institute of Chicago. Reportedly, Berchem would later travel to Washington to supervise the settings of the groups, which was accomplished by a local contractor, J. M. Falvey.

On June 1, 1908, the Kosciuszko Monument Central Committee entered into a contract with the Kyle Granite Company of Washington D.C. The contract for \$6,175 stated that Kyle Granite would “furnish and set complete” a granite pedestal of selected light Barre, Vermont granite that would be “free from knots, starts, sap, discoloration or any blemishes or cracks.” Smith Granite Company of Wesley, Rhode Island, made the pedestal. The granite work and the construction of the pedestal were to be done in accordance with the dimensions and different treatments as set forth in the drawing made by Popiel. By August 30, 1909, the bronze central shaft and side groups were cast and ready for shipment to Washington, over eight months ahead of the scheduled dedication in May 1910.

The Statue

The Kosciuszko statue stands 30 feet. The freestanding pedestrian figure of Kosciuszko rises 10 feet 8 inches off a granite pedestal and base measuring 19 feet 4 inches high sitting on a base measuring 22 feet 9 inches by 20 feet 9 inches at the ground level. Kosciuszko, a brigadier general, is shown in the uniform of a Continental army officer with epaulets, sash, and tall boots. His demeanor is purposeful, and his posture noble and energetic. In his right hand he holds the plans for his fortification works, and in his left he holds a sword. Surrounding Kosciuszko on four sides are allegorical groups cast in bronze. Below him on the north face of the pedestal is inscribed “Kościuszko.”

Flanking Kosciuszko on the east and west sides are figures representing his contributions to the American and Polish struggles for independence. The east side group with the flagstaff measures over 9 feet in height and represents the American Revolution. A figure in the uniform of the Continental army cuts loose the ties from around the waist of a reclined figure—a future free citizen of the United States. The west side group measuring just over 8 feet in height represents Kosciuszko’s contributions to the Polish cause for independence. This group references Kosciuszko’s victory at Raclawice where he led 6,000 Polish regulars and peasant militia against a much larger Russian force. The standing figure represents the Polish peasant army with folk dress, a homespun coat, and wearing a square pointed hat. He stands with a scythe sheltering a Polish officer who points into the distance with his right hand. On the north and south sides are figures of eagles on partial globes or hemispheres. On the north face, measuring over 5 feet high is the eagle of the western hemisphere expanding its wings to protect the American flag. Below on the base is the inscription “Saratoga.” On the south face of the statue is the eagle of the eastern hemisphere. The figure rises over 4 feet and shows an eagle fighting a snake or serpent that curls through parts of Europe and Asia. Below is inscribed “Raclawice.” For an unknown reason this eagle had a portion of the bottom of the wing closest to the granite base sheared off. The missing segment is clearly defined suggesting there may have been a

problem with alignment during the setting of the bronze figure against the granite.

Additional inscriptions that were not part of Popiel’s original model now appear on the statue. Only “Kościuszko,” “Saratoga,” and “Raclawice” were part of the original submission. The Polish National Alliance, as benefactors of the statue, added the language inscribed on the south side of the pedestal just before the statue’s dedication. The first line of this inscription was taken from

and commemorative items collected by the PNA in 1910 such as earth from the Kosciuszko Mound in Krakow, commemorative medals, periodicals of the day, and a copy of the Congressional legislation authorizing the statue.

Standing today at the Kosciuszko statue, one may wonder at the rather unfortunate orientation of the statue. It does not face the White House and the broad expanse of Pennsylvania Avenue as the Lafayette and Rochambeau stat-



Kosciuszko Statue with large elm tree in foreground, ca. 1950. U.S. COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

“The Pleasure of Hope,” a traditional, 18th century heroic poem by Thomas Campbell: “AND FREEDOM SHRIEKED / AS KOSCIUSZKO FELL.” Below this is inscribed: ERECTED BY THE / POLISH NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF AMERICA AND PRESENTED TO THE / UNITED STATES ON BEHALF OF THE / POLISH AMERICAN CITIZENS / MAY 11, 1910.

Later inscriptions, added in 1979 at the request of the PNA, include on the east base, GENERAL THADDEUS KOŚCIUSZKO / 1746–1817 / SON OF POLAND and on the west base, MILITARY ENGINEER / IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION / FORTIFIED SARATOGA AND WEST POINT. Finally, set inside the base of the monument is a copper “time capsule” box containing documents

ues, nor is it oriented at an angle, like the von Steuben statue facing Connecticut Avenue. Rather, Kosciuszko stands precisely due north on H Street facing a building instead of Vermont Avenue. At the time of the statue’s dedication a large old elm tree, probably planted as part of Charles Bulfinch’s 19th century plan for the park, stood just a few steps from the statue. To position it at an angle, like the von Steuben statue, would have it directly facing the trunk of a large elm tree, a placement that would have seemed odd, and maybe even offensive to some. Despite its close proximity to the statue great care was exercised over the years to sustain the elm; eventually it was removed some time between 1953 and 1960 because of its deteriorated condition.

The Statue's Dedication and Unveiling

By the time the statue was dedicated in May 1910, Theodore Roosevelt, who had accepted the offer for the statue in 1904, was no longer president. Now residing in the White House was William Howard Taft, Roosevelt's secretary of war who had been an original member of the Federal Kosciuszko statue commission. The Polish National Alliance fervently hoped that the Pulaski and Kosciuszko unveiling ceremonies would take place on May 3, 1910, which is the anniversary of the Polish constitution. Dedicating the statues on a day of national Polish pride was an important consideration. Unfortunately, the event was postponed until May 11, 1910, so that President Taft could attend both events. The Pulaski statue would be dedicated first at 2:30 p.m., followed by the Kosciuszko unveiling. Speakers at the Kosciuszko event would be Secretary of War Jacob M. Dickinson, clergy, and representatives of the Polish societies.

On the rainy day of the festivities, thousands of Polish Americans assembled in Washington. The joint ceremonies began at the Pulaski statue where President Taft delivered the principal address. Taft's speech recognized the contributions of foreign countries and their subjects to the cause of the American Revolution. He noted that it is difficult to say how America would have evolved without their help, so it was appropriate to erect these statues "to have it understood that America is grateful and holds in sweet memory those who came to her in her hour of trouble."

At the conclusion of Taft's address came a "magnificent parade... the likes of which Washington has not seen since the Taft inauguration." Thousands of Polish Americans, regular troops, militia, high school cadets, and scores in the military and native uniform of Poland passed in review before President Taft. The parade wound its way from the Pulaski statue at Pennsylvania Avenue and 13th Street to the northeast corner of Lafayette Park where the Kosciuszko statue stood draped and awaiting its unveiling.

The dedication ceremony at the Kosciuszko statue got underway at approximately four o'clock as the parade concluded. The U.S. Marine Corps Band

played, followed by an address in Polish by M. B. Steczynski, the president of the Polish National Alliance. Anthony Schreiber, censor of the Polish National Alliance, formally presented the gift of the Kosciuszko statue to the United States on behalf of the Polish American organizations. Secretary of War Dickinson formally accepted the statue on behalf of the United States. Julian Szajnert, the last surviving founder of the PNA was given the honor of unveiling the Kosciuszko statue. A battery salute from the Third Field Artillery signaled the unveiling, followed by the singing of the Star-Spangled Banner by Polish singing societies accompanied by the U.S. Marine Corps Band. The ceremonies concluded with a benediction by the Episcopal Bishop of Washington, Reverend Alfred Harding, and closing music by the U.S. Marine Corps Band.

The Statue Since 1910

In the first years after the statue's dedication, a number of other Kosciuszko statues followed. Two in New York are



Kosciuszko Monument at West Point, 1917. The original memorial was constructed in 1828; the bronze statue was added in 1913. (Source: USMA Library, Special Collections and Archives, Stockbridge Collection.)

UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY AT WEST POINT

noteworthy because they have been attributed to Antoni Popiel. They are located at the rectory at St. Casimir's Catholic Church in Yonkers (1912) and the United States Military Academy at West Point (1913). These statues bear similarities to Popiel's statue, since they were commissioned explicitly to replicate his work shortly after his statue was unveiled in Lafayette Park. However, a different artist and foundry were employed and in fact they were initiated after Popiel's death.

Most recently on November 16, 2010, an exact replica of Popiel's statue, pedestal and base was dedicated in front of Lubomirski Palace at Iron Gate Square in Warsaw, Poland. The statue was erected as a private initiative of the Polish Association for the Building of a Statue of Thaddeus Kosciuszko with financial support from Citibank Handlowy.

Since its unveiling in May 1910, the Kosciuszko statue has drawn visitors from Poland and hosted commemorations from Polish Americans, particularly on February 12, Kosciuszko's birthday. The only addition to the statue were the inscriptions carved into the east and west base in 1979 at the request of the Polish National Alliance (PNA). The PNA, the organization that donated the statue, believed there was no information on the statue to identify who Kosciuszko was. The PNA felt the additional inscriptions would create a better understanding and appreciation of Kosciuszko and his contributions to the American Revolution. The statue was declared a National Historic Landmark on August 29, 1970, as part of the Lafayette Square Historic District. In the intervening years, the statue has undergone some degradation but because of periodic cleaning and conservation the statue remains in good condition. High park visitation and the relative accessibility of the lower bronzes has resulted in some damage to the monument since 1910.

A 1975 National Park Service report recommended preservation work for the statue. A six-step cleaning process was undertaken in 1987, which involved low-pressure washing with a non-ionic detergent and hot water. Further cleaning was achieved under very controlled conditions using ground walnut shells under pressure. A third washing with detergent and water followed. This cleaning restored details that had become obscured over time and

produced a smooth clean surface that was darker and more uniform in color consistent with the original intended appearance.

After the washings, several coats of a corrosion inhibitor were carefully applied. This treatment included the application and buffing of two layers of a protective wax coat. The wax treatment is designed to deter damaging effects of corrosion. Once the cleaning process was completed the statue regained the uniform color and metallic sheen that had been lost. In addition to conservation work to the bronzes, the granite base was also cleaned and masonry joints caulked. This entire process was again repeated in 2000 and 2008 pursuant to the National Park Service's scheduled conservation program now in place for the statues in Lafayette Park.

In 2009, visual inspections of the statue revealed additional missing items on the statue that were not included in the 1987 treatment report. The 1987 report listed as missing the left spur of the main figure; the sword of the standing figure on the east side; an unidentified item from the left of the waist of the fallen figure on the west side; the tongue from the serpent atop the south side globe; and a plume from the hat of the standing figure on the west side. By 2009, additional missing elements included broken braids on the west side fallen figure; an ornamentation at the waist of the seated soldier on the east side; an object, such as a small sword or knife in the hand of the soldier on the east side; and a finial from the flagpole on the north bronze.

There have been few changes to the landscaping immediately surrounding the statue. In the 1960s, Lady Bird Johnson initiated a beautification program for Washington. Seasonal plantings were placed around the statues at Lafayette Park. Prior to 1994, the floral beds displayed tulips in the spring, a variety of annuals in the summer, and mums in the fall. Afterward, pink azaleas were planted and then removed in 2003 when sod was laid around the granite base of the statue. In September 2009, new sod was laid around the base of the monument

and in early October 2009 the District of Columbia Government trimmed the trees, specifically those in front of the statue, along the sidewalk on H Street.

Despite the Kosciuszko statue's location at a busy downtown park corner, it remains in remarkable condition for its age. Throughout the over 100 years since its placement, the statue has witnessed the history of events in Lafayette Park. It has been a silent spectator to demonstrations, inaugurations, and festivities particularly those marked by Polish Americans on the day of Kosciuszko's birth. Popiel's artistic and sculptural mastery is still evident in the detailed likeness of Kosciuszko as the Revolutionary War hero and intricate details of the figural side groupings. The statue stands as an enduring gift from Polish Americans to the United States and a constant testament to the great accomplishments of Thaddeus Kosciuszko—the hero of two hemispheres.

To learn more about the General Thaddeus Kosciuszko Statue:

Primary Sources:

Textual Records:

Record Group 42: Records of the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

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Kosciuszko Monument Central Committee Records, 1902–1907. Polish Museum of America, Chicago, Illinois.

Photographic and Cartographic Records:

Record Group 42: Records of the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital, National Archives and

Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

Record Group 79: Records of the National Park Service, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland.

Kosciuszko Monument Central Committee Records, 1902–1907. Polish Museum of America, Chicago, Illinois.

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The statue of General Thaddeus Kosciuszko in Lafayette Park is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. The statue and park are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Address inquires to: Park Manager, President's Park, White House Visitor Center, 1450 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20230.

Further information is available at www.nps.gov/whho

Adriana Ercolano researched and developed the history of the General Thaddeus Kosciuszko Statue President's Park Note for the Office of the National Park Service Liaison to the White House. This research project was made possible through the generous support of the White House Historical Association.

