

The Purest Son of Liberty I Have Ever Known  
Literary Club of Cincinnati

May 17, 2021

Thaddeus S. Jaroszewicz

Andrzej Tadeusz Bonaventura Kosciuszko, known as Thaddeus Kosciuszko, made some of the most invaluable and pivotal contributions to the American Revolution as a military engineer and strategist. Between 1776 and 1783, he was critical in America's victory at Saratoga; he was the chief architect of the fortifications at West Point; and he was the Chief Engineer of the Southern Army under Nathanael Greene. His story is largely forgotten, even though many towns, bridges and parks bear his name. I grew up in Cleveland at 8302 Kosciuszko Avenue. Without Kosciuszko's engineering genius, his amiable disposition and relentless commitment to the cause of liberty, we might still be singing "God Save the Queen" instead of The Star-Spangled Banner.

Thaddeus Kosciuszko was born in February 1746, near Brest Litovsk, about 130 miles east of Warsaw. He was the fourth child and second son of members of Poland's minor nobility. They had modest landholdings worked by 31 serf families.

Kosciuszko's formal education began at age 9, when he was sent to a Catholic school run by an enlightened order of Priests, who introduced him to John Locke and the Ancient Greeks. "He was riveted by the story of Timoleon, the Greek statesman who freed his fellow Corinthians and the Sicilians from the tyranny of Carthage." Kosciuszko was impressed that "Timoleon overthrew tyrants, set up republics, but never demanded any power for himself."

He returned home when he was 14, on account of his Father's death. His education continued under the direction of a local priest and an uncle, who noticed his talent in math, geometry and art. When Kosciuszko was 18, Stanislaus Poniatowski was elected King of Poland. With his cousin Prince Adam Czartoryski as headmaster, they established a new military academy in Warsaw called the Knights' School. Kosciuszko's tutors, along with the local magnate Joseph Sosnowski, recommended him for admission to the Academy's inaugural class.

Kosciuszko excelled at the new military academy. The best available European military instructors had been recruited to teach there. Kosciuszko was a dedicated student, and popular with his fellow cadets, who chose him to be their emissary to the King.

Upon graduation in 1768, Kosciuszko took advantage of a Royal scholarship to study in Paris. As he was not a French Citizen, Kosciuszko could not officially attend France's military academy. Instead, he enrolled in an Art Institute and privately hired instructors from the French military academy as tutors. From Paris, Thaddeus wrote to the head of the Knights' School, "we are studying the construction of bridges, floodgates, roads, dams, canals, etc." He studied the work of Vauban, Europe's best mind on the building and besieging of forts. His free time was spent in the cafes of Paris, learning about Rousseau, Voltaire, Montesquieu and the economist Francois Quesnay. After Paris, he travelled to Holland to study the construction of dikes, and then toured England and Europe.

He returned home in 1774 to a diminished Poland. During his six-year absence, Poland had endured a civil war and its first partition by the Russians, Prussians and Austro-Hungarians. His older brother had squandered the family's modest inheritance. The civil war and partition resulted in smaller budgets for the Polish military. Officers' commissions had to be purchased. He could not afford a commission.

He bounced around between his sisters' homes and Warsaw, where he visited friends from the Knights' School. On one visit to Warsaw, his friends invited him to a ball, where he met Ludwiga Sosonowska, the daughter of his sponsor for the Knights' School, Joseph Sosnowski. She was young, exceptionally bright and beautiful.

Sosnowski hired Kosciuszko, now well-educated and multi-lingual, to tutor his daughters Catherine and Ludwiga. As lessons progressed,

Thaddeus and Ludwiga fell in love. Kosciuszko petitioned Sosnowski and the King for permission to marry her, which was denied. By a magnate's standards, Kosciuszko was a pauper. Sosnowski told him "turtle doves are not meant for sparrows." The young couple made a valiant attempt to elope, but were thwarted by Sosnowski's henchmen, who took Ludwiga and severely beat Kosciuszko.

Sosnowski had already promised Ludwiga to the son of a wealthy prince. The old man was furious and wanted Kosciuszko prosecuted for abduction and ravishment. Kosciuszko had to leave Poland promptly, simply to protect his own life. In October 1775, with the help of his former headmaster and sisters, he left saying "I will either distinguish myself, or end my misery."

He wound up in Paris where the talk of the town was the American rebellion. His Parisian friends from his student days provided him with insights on who the important players were in America. Excited by the prospect of helping the American Cause, Kosciuszko left France for Philadelphia in June 1776. Because of British blockades, the voyage required a detour through the Caribbean. Kosciuszko landed in Martinique where he observed the horrific treatment of Africans who were victims of the slave trade. A fishing vessel took him and his fellow adventurers up the east coast of Central and North America, docking in Philadelphia in August 1776.

Without any letters of introduction, Kosciuszko went to see Benjamin Franklin. Fortunately, they both spoke French. He asked Franklin to arrange two things: first, a commission as a military engineer; then an officer's placement exam. Franklin quipped "...and who would proctor such an exam?"

In 1776, America was a land of farmers and merchants. It had no standing army or military academies. Through their conversations about Europe,

Franklin assessed that Kosciuszko had only good intentions in America. With the help of a friend, Franklin ascertained Kosciuszko's skills in drawing, geometry and mathematics.

Franklin was the head of the Pennsylvania Safety Board, which was concerned about a possible British naval attack on Philadelphia via the Delaware River. He secured Kosciuszko a position as an engineer to design and implement a system of forts and defense works on the Delaware. Kosciuszko spent his first several months in America working on the project. He developed a reputation for being practical, competent, and an effective leader.

Meanwhile, George Washington was frustrated with the engineers the French had provided. He wrote "For want of some establishment in the Department of Engineers...none of the French Gentlemen with whom I have seen with appointment in that way, appears to know anything of the matter. There is one in Philadelphia whom I am told is clever, but him I have never met." Because Kosciuszko spoke French, he was often mistaken for a Frenchman.

In October 1776, Kosciuszko received a letter from John Hancock, the head of the Continental Congress, commissioning him a Colonel in the Colonial Army, with the duties of a military engineer, at an initial pay rate of \$60 per month. Continental officers stationed around Philadelphia got to know Kosciuszko and recognized his skills, especially Horatio Gates.

Horatio Gates was born in England and started his military career in the British Army. He fought in the French and Indian War. He was unable to secure an officer's commission in the British Army because of his "low born" status, so he moved to America permanently, and bought a farm. He offered his services to Washington as an officer in late 1775, after the rebellion erupted in Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts. In late fall

1776, Gates was in Philadelphia lobbying the Continental Congress for command of the Northern Army in upstate New York.

Gates' rival for command of the Northern Army was Benedict Arnold, a fierce and competent military officer. In May 1775, with Ethan Allen and 100 militiamen, Arnold crossed Lake Champlain and in an early morning attack, captured Fort Ticonderoga from the British.

Using his superior political skills, Gates secured the command of the Northern Army, which he wrested from Phillip Schuyler, a wealthy upstate New Yorker who is best known today as Alexander Hamilton's father-in-law. Arnold was bitterly disappointed.

Gates spoke fluent French and befriended Kosciuszko. Gates asked Kosciuszko to be the Northern Army's Chief Engineer. They travelled to Albany, New York in the Spring of 1777 to prepare for battle.

Meanwhile, the British Secretary of State for the Colonies and General John Burgoyne hatched an elaborate plan in London, approved by King George III, to destroy the Northern Army by attacking it at Fort Ticonderoga from three directions. The British were intent on separating the rebellious New England colonies from the more loyal south. Burgoyne left London in early 1777 having made a wager with a friend that he would be home by Christmas with a victory in hand.

Fort Ticonderoga, a large, European-style star shaped fort was built by French Canadians between 1755 and 1757, during the French Indian War. It stood on an isthmus between Lake George and Lake Champlain. The British occupied it in 1759 and held it until Benedict Arnold seized it in 1775.

In early May 1777, Gates sent Kosciuszko to assess Ticonderoga and the surrounding terrain. The colonel observed that a large hill called Sugar

Loaf (now named Mt. Defiance) stared over the Fort. He climbed it and calculated that artillery positioned there could easily reach the fort. He felt that if the hill was armed with cannon, and if obstacles were placed in the roadways, Ticonderoga presented an excellent spot for a victory over the British. While Gates supported Kosciuszko's idea, he lost his command of the Northern Army back to Schuyler. Kosciuszko's plans to arm Sugar Loaf Hill were dismissed as impractical. Instead, he was assigned 100 men to build floating bridges on the southern side of the Fort.

Burgoyne had marched his Army of 8,000 British and Hessian soldiers from Canada, arriving at Ticonderoga on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1777. Burgoyne's chief engineer immediately recognized the importance of Sugar Loaf Hill, and over the objection of his soldiers, ordered them to take artillery up the hill. He reasoned "where a goat can go, a man can go, and where a man can go, he can haul up a gun."

On July 5, 1777, the Continental Army woke up at Fort Ticonderoga to the sight of redcoats on top of Sugar Loaf Hill, with cannon aimed directly at them. The British began firing. That night, an orderly retreat began. Fortunately, Kosciuszko's floating bridges had been completed, which enabled the evacuation. Unfortunately, a fire broke out at the fort revealing the retreating Americans to the British.

Burgoyne's army laid chase to the Americans, whose retreat became chaotic. Schuyler, informed of the situation, ordered Kosciuszko to take charge of the retreat, providing him with a horse and several hundred men to do what was necessary to slow the British pursuit.

Kosciuszko's unit cut down large trees along the road, about every thirty feet. They blew up bridges and rolled large stones into rivers to divert water and flood the surrounding roadways. They burned corn and wheat fields, and chased away livestock, forcing the British to live off of their

supply train. On their way down from Canada, the British Army was moving at 18 miles per day. Thanks to Kosciuszko's work, the British were slowed to one mile per day, giving the Northern Army time to regroup and reinforce their numbers.

Years later, Col. John Armstrong wrote to Thomas Jefferson that "In the retreat of the American Army, Kosciuszko was distinguished for activity and courage and upon him devolved the choices of camps and posts and everything connected with fortifications."

Schuyler lost his command of the Northern Army, which was given back to Gates, once again to Benedict Arnold's chagrin.

By early September 1777, the Northern Army was near Saratoga, New York, 75 miles south of Ticonderoga. Gates sent Cols. Morgan Lewis and Kosciuszko to survey the spot he had chosen to take on Burgoyne. Kosciuszko assessed the topography - a floodplain surrounded by hills that would be impossible to defend. It was the wrong spot. They went back to Gates, who gave Kosciuszko instructions to find a better position. Kosciuszko and Lewis rode around until they came upon Bemis Heights. Lewis later wrote "the Polander rode his horse rapidly around part of the hill and exclaimed "This is the Spot.""

Alex Storozycki, one of Kosciuszko's biographers, described the terrain chosen for the battle as follows: "Bemis Heights looks down upon a bottleneck that the British would have to squeeze through between the hills and the [Hudson] River [to the east]. The Heights have four parallel crevasses carved into them by a Mill Creek and its tributaries. Below the cliffs to the east was a narrow riverside passage running south to Albany. To the west were hills that were thickly forested, that would prevent the British from outflanking the Northern Army."

It was a perfect place to set a trap. Colonel Kosciuszko laid out a detailed plan for trenches, parapets, redoubts, fortifications and escape routes, which his men ably executed. The spirits of Gates' Army rose as the encampment took shape and reinforcements arrived. Washington had sent a group of sharpshooters to help Gates' effort. They were backwoodsmen led by Daniel Morgan, who were armed with Pennsylvania Rifles. At 100 yards, they were deadly shots.

The Battle of Saratoga took place on two days, a few weeks apart. On September 19, 1777, Burgoyne showed up for the first encounter – The Battle of Freeman's Farm. The British and Hessian units were unable to challenge Kosciuszko's fortifications. They had to march around the redoubts, along the edge of the woods. Morgan's men waited in the trees, dressed in hunting shirts. They began picking off British officers at the front of their units, then began shooting at the main column. Arnold spent the afternoon charging into the British column with reinforcements.

By the end of the day, the British had lost dozens of officers and a total of 600 killed or wounded, twice the American casualties. The Americans had run low on ammunition and were unable to finish off Burgoyne. The British, unaware of the Colonists' ammunition shortage, withdrew, buried their dead, and went off to reorganize.

About two weeks later, Burgoyne attacked again, swinging his men west of the fortifications. Morgan's sharpshooters, and the Americans inflicted heavy losses on the British. Arnold sustained a serious injury to his left leg when his horse was shot and fell over on top of him.

Burgoyne's reinforcements never arrived. Burgoyne recognized his efforts were futile, and on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 1777, surrendered his Army to Gates.

A year later, in a discussion about Saratoga with Dr. Benjamin Rush, Gates said “Let us be honest Doctor, in war as in medicine, natural causes not under our control do much. In the present case, the great tacticians of the campaign were the hills and forest, which a young Polish engineer was skillful enough to select for my encampment.”

The news of the Colonial Army’s victory over the British was electrifying, in the colonies and in Europe. The victory gave Benjamin Franklin, now in Paris, a strong argument to convince the French that America had a chance against the British. The French agreed to provide money, men, ships, gunpowder and arms. They recognized America’s independence from Britain. Saratoga became the pivotal battle of the Revolutionary War. Once the French went “all in” for the Americans, America’s likelihood of victory improved dramatically.

In March 1778, on Gates’ recommendation, Kosciuszko was commissioned as the Chief Engineer for the fortifications being built at West Point. Washington and his advisers recognized the strategic importance of West Point early in the conflict with the British. The Hudson River, then called the North River, was the primary commercial waterway connecting the New England States to the Atlantic.

West Point is about 55 miles north of Manhattan. There, the Hudson River makes a sharp westward turn, followed by a sharp northward turn. Ships sailing north had to slow down to make the tacks westward and northward, into a prevailing northerly wind. Even 55 miles north of New York Harbor, the Hudson is a tidal estuary. The combination of tides, turns and wind make it a difficult spot for a ship to proceed upriver with any speed.

The plateau, or plain where the United States Military Academy is located today, sits 200 feet above the river. It is a flat piece of land where thousands of troops could be garrisoned. The path down to the river is

rocky and steep. About one mile west of the river, tall hills rise and run along the entirety of the plateau. Washington called it The Gibraltar of America. About 1 mile across the river to the east is a tall, rocky peninsula called Constitution Island.

Nick Trelka, my wife and I went up to West Point in early May 2021. We were taken on an extensive tour by Retired Lt. Colonel Sherman Fleek, West Point's Command Historian. We visited the restored fortifications and redoubts, as well as the Kosciuszko Garden. What struck us was the extraordinary scale of the location that needed to be fortified.

The initial plan to fortify West Point was developed by a young French Engineer, Captain Louis de la Raidiere. The plans were grandiose and impractical. And no one could stand working with the Frenchman. He was condescending and overbearing.

Kosciuszko surveyed the terrain, the sheer incline from the river and the hills surrounding the plateau. During his 2 ½ year stay, he developed and executed a three-part plan to fortify the strategic location:

- 1) At the river level, a heavy chain, weighing 185 tons that stretched 1,500 feet, with links 2 1/2" thick and three feet long, was commissioned to replace a prior chain that had been removed by the British. An equally long log boom was strung immediately east of the chain. Kosciuszko designed a capstan for reeling the chain in and out, a job that required 40 men. Two batteries and three redoubts were built on Constitution Island to provide direct firepower on any approaching ships.
- 2) On the plateau, three forts were built, then named Wyllys, Webb and Arnold, looking directly down on the river, armed with cannons. Fort Arnold was later renamed Fort Clinton.

3) On the tall hills to the west, Kosciuszko built Fort Putnam and three redoubts, to protect the plain from a land-based invasion.

Looking at it today, it's clear that the plan was ingenious. Each of the forts and redoubts were small (by European standards), to be manned by one to two hundred men. Geometrically, the forts and redoubts were arranged so that artillery and gunfire could cover the plateau and river. The small star shaped forts allowed for coverage in all directions. Initially, the forts were built of earth and timber. Over time, several were further strengthened with stone.

For the first few months after Kosciuszko's arrival at West Point, the young French engineer Radier, and the Continental Army's chief engineer, a French officer named Louis Duportail, disagreed with Kosciuszko's plan, and did everything in their power to undermine him. But Kosciuszko gained the confidence of the only man whose opinion counted, George Washington.

Kosciuszko and Washington first met in July, and then again in September of 1778. Both times Kosciuszko personally gave Washington a tour of every fort and redoubt being built. The Commander in Chief was exceptionally pleased with the progress. Washington, who had been a surveyor as a young man, understood the ingenuity of Kosciuszko's design, and was most impressed with the progress that had been made at West Point under Kosciuszko's direction. The construction continued through hot summers and frigid winters, through lack of food, shoes, clothing and building supplies. Kosciuszko made do with what he had.

Through the hardships, Kosciuszko generally maintained a cheerful attitude. He developed close friendships with many officers who went on to become important Americans after the Revolution. They attested to his amiability and clever mind in diaries, letters and memoirs published after the war.

In late 1779, Kosciuszko was assigned an aide-de-camp, a free African American from Stockbridge, Massachusetts named Agrippa Hull. Agrippa, nicknamed Grippy, volunteered for military service shortly after the rebellion began. Grippy was a natural raconteur. He told the officers at West Point that his father had been an African Prince. According to a story that Grippy told until the end of his long life, one afternoon, Kosciuszko set off on some business across the Hudson. Agrippa invited his black friends to a dinner at Kosciuszko's log cabin. Hull put on Kosciuszko's dress uniform and entertained his friends with Kosciuszko's wine. Kosciuszko returned unexpectedly to discover the party. The guests scurried out, and Grippy was mortified, begging Kosciuszko for forgiveness and a flogging. Instead, Kosciuszko said "Rise Prince, it is beneath the dignity of an African Prince to prostrate himself before anyone." Instead of a flogging, Kosciuszko took Agrippa, in full regalia, over to see his fellow officers. They made him drink a range of alcoholic concoctions that gave Grippy a massive hangover in the morning. Hull served as Kosciuszko's aide-de-camp and companion for the balance of the war. To this day, Hull's portrait hangs prominently in the Stockbridge, Massachusetts Library.

Kosciuszko continued as the Chief Engineer at West Point through the summer of 1780, when Horatio Gates was given command of the Southern Army, which was in a state of disarray. He asked Kosciuszko to accompany him on the campaign as his Chief Engineer. Kosciuszko had been anxious to get into battle, and asked Washington for permission to join Gates. That same summer, Benedict Arnold was in Philadelphia, lobbying the Continental Congress and Washington for command of West Point. He claimed that injuries sustained to his left leg at Saratoga made him unfit for a battle command. Unbeknownst to any of the Americans, Arnold had already set in motion his treasonous plan to betray the American Cause by selling the plans for West Point to the

British for a sum of 20,000 pounds and a general's commission in the British Army.

On August 3, 1780, Washington granted Kosciuszko's request to join Gates. The same day he commissioned Arnold the commander at West Point. Kosciuszko left West Point to join the Southern Army a few days later with his trusted aide, Agrippa Hull.

Prior to leaving, and without informing anyone, Kosciuszko left all his drawings and plans in a chest at a local boarding house where he stayed prior to building himself a small log cabin at West Point. When a new, young French engineer arrived as Kosciuszko's replacement, he had to create from scratch an entire set of new drawings, an inventory of the forts and redoubts, and the requirements for manpower and artillery.

On his way South, Kosciuszko visited Washington at his headquarters. Washington sent a letter with Kosciuszko for General Gates in which he wrote "I have taken the opportunity of writing by Colo. Kosciuszko, with whom I part reluctantly, as I have experienced great Satisfaction from his general conduct, and particularly from the attention and zeal with which he has prosecuted the Works committed to his charge at West Point."

Upon his arrival at West Point late that summer, Arnold immediately began weakening the fort's defenses. On September 21, 1780, Arnold personally delivered the new engineer's drawings and inventory of West Point to John Andre, a British spy. He also provided Andre with a pass. Andre was arrested on his way back to safety, legend has it, because he was wearing officer's boots, unusual for a man dressed in civilian clothing. The plans were in his boots, as was Arnold's pass. Arnold's gig was up. Four days later, at breakfast, Arnold intercepted a letter meant for Washington describing Andre's arrest. Arnold slipped away and rode his horse a few miles downriver to a waiting British vessel. Washington and a large contingent showed up only minutes after Arnold's escape.

West Point, Kosciuszko's masterpiece was saved, and for the balance of the war was never attacked.

Kosciuszko stopped in Richmond, Virginia to meet with then Governor Thomas Jefferson, to solicit help in getting supplies for the Southern Army. It was the beginning of a long and warm friendship. However, Kosciuszko was troubled by the fact that the author of the Declaration of Independence, and the words "all men are created equal", was himself a slave owner.

In August 1780, prior to Kosciuszko's arrival, Gates decided to attack a strong British position at Camden, South Carolina. Gates' Army was routed, with 900 killed and 1,000 taken prisoner. During the melee, Gates became disoriented, and rode his horse 180 miles in three days, to Hillsborough, North Carolina. Gates' military career was over. He relinquished his command of the Southern Army to General Nathaniel Greene in late 1780.

Greene had served Washington with distinction from the very beginning of the Revolution, starting in Boston in 1775. He was levelheaded, calm under fire, and a master strategist. His friends, foes and historians considered him second only to Washington in ability as a General.

Kosciuszko helped Greene hone his plan for hit and run guerrilla warfare. At Greene's request, Kosciuszko designed flat bottomed boats that could be transported easily over land. The boats gave the Southern Army the ability to ford rivers and streams with ease, to the great frustration of the British. With Kosciuszko's reconnaissance, Greene's army chose strong positions from which to operate.

"Historian James Pula wrote "Kosciuszko appeared to be everywhere, handling the myriads of details necessary for success, planning lines of

march, gathering and dispatching crucial boats, and seeking little known shortcuts.””

Greene’s Army ran the British ragged, engaging and eluding them at every turn. Ultimately, Lord Cornwallis took his Army north into Yorktown, Virginia to get resupplied and reinforced. He walked into a trap where Washington’s Army and the French Navy cornered him and forced him to surrender.

The War did not end at Yorktown on October 19, 1781. It dragged on for another year. The British finally sailed off in December 1782. The treaty ending the war was signed in April 1783.

When the war ended, Kosciuszko sailed north with Hull to Philadelphia. Greene, writing to a fellow General, said “Among the most useful and agreeable of my companions in arms, was Colonel Kosciuszko. Nothing could exceed his zeal for the public service, nor in the prosecution of various objects that presented themselves in our small but active warfare, could anything be more useful than his attention, vigilance and industry.”

During his 7-year service in the Revolution, Kosciuszko never drew his pay. He petitioned Congress for his back pay and a promotion to General. He had overwhelming support on both accounts from Washington, Greene and others he’d served with. Congress finally issued him a Note for \$12,280 at 6% interest, and 500 acres of land in what is now Dublin, Ohio. He was brevetted to Brigadier General.

In December 1783, Kosciuszko attended a luncheon at Fraunces Tavern in lower Manhattan, where Washington said goodbye to his fellow officers. Washington thanked all for their service, and asked them to come up to say their goodbyes. He shook hands and embraced each officer. When Kosciuszko came up, Washington embraced him, removed

his ring signifying his membership in the Society of Cincinnati, which he placed on Kosciuszko's finger. The Latin inscription on the inside of the ring read "He gave up everything to serve the Republic."

## EPILOGUE

Kosciuszko left America in July 1784. He asked Grippy to go with him, but Hull went back to Stockbridge, and became a prosperous businessman. He lived to the ripe old age of 89.

Not long after his return to Poland, Kosciuszko's former fiancé, now Princess Ludwiga Lubomirska, arranged a general's commission for him. Kosciuszko supported a new written Constitution for Poland, which provided for basic rights for serfs, Jews and non-noblemen. He led two failed rebellions in Poland, both crushed by Catherine the Great's military. Poland disappeared from the political map of Europe in 1795, and Kosciuszko wound up in prison in St. Petersburg for two years. Upon Catherine's death, Kosciuszko was freed by her son Czar Paul I.

Kosciuszko returned to Philadelphia in 1797, to a hero's welcome. His mission - to collect his back pay and catch up with old friends. None of the principal or interest on the \$12,280 note had ever been paid. During his yearlong stay in Philadelphia, he was visited by many notable luminaries and formed a close friendship with Thomas Jefferson.

Kosciuszko eventually received the money he was owed, which was placed in a trust whose Executor was Thomas Jefferson. Interest on the money was to be remitted to Kosciuszko. The principal was left to Jefferson's care for a higher purpose. In a will he signed in May 1798, Kosciuszko stated that upon his death, the proceeds from the Trust should be used to purchase freedom for Jefferson's or other slaves, and to provide for their education. By the time of Kosciuszko's death in 1817 in Switzerland, the Trust's value had grown to \$17,000 (about \$350,000 in today's money). Jefferson submitted the Will to a court in Virginia. Due

to age and infirmity, but more likely his inability to face the prospect of freeing and educating his slaves, Jefferson gave up his role as Executor. The Will was further remitted to a Federal Orphan's Court. The Will was contested for nearly 30 years. The case made it to the Supreme Court three times. Kosciuszko had made three other wills in Europe, causing the confusion. The money was never used for its intended purpose. However, the Will stood as a testament to Kosciuszko's commitment to liberty and self-determination for all. He had freed his serfs in Poland, and was looking to set an example for the treatment of Africans in America.

In a 1798 letter to Horatio Gates, Jefferson wrote: "I see General Kosciuszko often...he is as pure a son of liberty, as I have ever known, and of that liberty which is to go to all, and not to the few or the rich alone."

## Sources

Storozynski, Alex, *The Peasant Prince: Thaddeus Kosciuszko and the Age of Revolution*, St. Martin's Press, 2009

Kajencki, Francis Casimir, *Thaddeus Kosciuszko; Military Engineer of the American Revolution*, Southwest Polonia Press, 1998

Pula, James S., *Thaddeus Kosciuszko, The Purest Son of Liberty*, Hippocrene Books, 1999

Palmer, Dave Richard, *The River and the Rock, The History of Fortress West Point*, 1991

Sherman L. Fleek  
Lt. Col. US Army (Retired)  
United States Military Academy  
Command Historian