

Address at  
Unveiling of Monument in Memory  
of General Thaddeus Kosciuszko  
at the Battlefield at Bemis Heights  
Saratoga Springs, New York  
October 25, 1936

Thaddeus Kosciuszko, we are here to do you honor.

It was you, who, with your scientific education - especially in the art of fortifications - with a commission as Chief Engineer, began your work with General Schuyler and General Gates here at Saratoga. It was you who planned the entrenchment of the American army at Bemis Heights, and it was you who selected Moses Creek, four miles below Fort Edward, as a point at which to check the advance of General Burgoyne.

Of you it was said that your "strategic skill in the fortification of Bemis Heights was an important factor in our victory at Saratoga" - and again, it was said of you that "your skill at Saratoga contributed in a very great measure to the recognition of the United States by France and to the ultimate victory of the Colonies."

You prepared yourself for this contribution to the independence of the United States while a student at the cadet college at Warsaw, and later in France you pursued your studies under Marshal Vauban, the outstanding military engineer of your time.

You also studied in England for seven years, after which you returned to Poland and received a commission as captain. You were then placed in charge of restorations and fortifications at Cracow.

In 1776 you went to Paris and obtained a letter from Benjamin Franklin. With this you came to America, to George Washington. You were the first foreign patriot to heed the call and the first to come to the aid of the American colonies in their struggle for freedom.

Having made your contribution here at Saratoga, you were sent to West Point to strengthen the defenses on the Hudson. George Washington said of your work at West Point that "to your care and sedulous appreciation the American people are indebted for the defense of West Point." And again George Washington wrote that he "experienced great satisfaction from your general conduct and particularly from the attention and zeal with which you prosecuted the works committed to your charge at West Point."

In 1780 you were transferred at your own request to the Southern Army, where your services for the American cause were equally distinguished.

And of you General Greene said: "My warmest approbation is due to you as an officer and my particular acknowledgment as a friend."

On October 13, 1783, you were raised to the rank of Brigadier-General on the recommendation of Washington "for long, faithful and honorable services in the American Army." You met with success here; then you returned to Poland.

During the Polish-Russian Campaign of 1792, in one of your engagements, after having three horses killed under you, exhausted and bleeding you fell by the lance of a Cossack, and across your forehead a sabre left a deep and long gash. You were carried away to prison at St. Petersburg, and later you were offered a high command in the Russian Army, which you did not accept. You stated then "I have never fought except in the cause of human freedom in America and Poland and I can never serve in any other cause."

Still later you again visited America. Your return here met with enthusiasm - the American hero! You intended to remain here, but a sudden secret summons called you back to Poland. Before leaving here you bequeathed all of your lands and money in America to be used in the emancipation and education of the negro. We note particularly that this was done about 65 years before Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation.

When your efforts in behalf of the freedom of Poland were unsuccessful you retired and spent the rest of your life with your friend, Zeltner, in the mountains of Switzerland, where you quietly and unassumingly devoted yourself entirely to acts of true human kindness among the Swiss peasants, who to this day pray for the repose of your soul.

One day, after returning from a call that you paid a sick friend, your horse stumbled and you were bruised. Shortly afterward you were attacked by a serious nervous fever, and you died in the arms of your friend Zeltner, surrounded by Zeltner's weeping family, on October 15, 1817.

When you lived and fought, you were surrounded by many - when you died, you were surrounded by the members of only one family - true and loyal to you to the end.

After your death a dainty kerchief was found next to your heart where it rested forty years. Blood stained. It was recalled that defending your beloved Louise, you were wounded. She was taken from your side, but her handkerchief remained with you throughout the forty years of your glorious activity. You were genuine.

About one hundred and sixty years after your contribution at Saratoga we meet here, thousands of us to pay tribute to you for what you had given us about one hundred and sixty years ago.

General Kosciuszko, we salute you!