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ARCHITECT OF VICTORY

BY
SENATOR EDMUND S. MUSKIE

Few men have been as dedicated to liberty and freedom as Thaddeus Kosciuszko. Born in Poland on February 12, 1746, Kosciuszko was living in Paris when he first heard about the American struggle against tyranny. Borrowing money for the trip, he sailed to America to join the cause of American independence.

Kosciuszko served that cause brilliantly. As a trained engineer, he constructed the successful fortifications for the Delaware River and for those at West Point, New York. His choice of battlefields and the erection of fortifications at Saratoga contributed materially to the American victory over John Burgoyne at Saratoga. Later he distinguished himself as an officer of cavalry in General Greene's Carolina campaign. Clearly, General Thaddeus Kosciuszko was one of the architects of the American victory.

In 1784, Kosciuszko returned to Poland, where he became a Major General of the Polish Army. In the spring of 1792, he led the tiny Polish Army in its brave, but vain, resistance against the Russians. After several brilliant successes, and only after the most fierce resistance and a nearly fatal wound, he was defeated and captured by the Russians. After two years of captivity, he returned to the United States, where he was warmly welcomed as a revolutionary hero. During his second stay in America, he lived at 301 Pine Street in Philadelphia. Later he returned to Europe to continue his brave, but unsuccessful, efforts for Polish freedom.

Kosciuszko's total devotion to liberty and Polish independence has made him one of the great Polish heroes. I think he should also be honored and recognized as a great hero of the American Revolution.

This is why I am extremely disappointed by the recent decision of the Advisory Board of the National Park Service of the Department of Interior to reject Kosciuszko's home in Philadelphia as a National Historic Site. The Board's reasoning is as specious as its decision is unwise. The Board reasons that the house did not qualify as a National Historic Site because Kosciuszko lived there for only six months. To reject the house for such a reason is to fault Kosciuszko for being a soldier, and for living the life of a soldier. In his fight for American freedom, Kosciuszko seldom stayed in any place for a long time. In fact, the house at 301 Pine Street in Philadelphia is the only American structure associated with Kosciuszko.

This building was saved from the demolition crews so that all Americans, including Americans of Polish-American descent, could honor this great man. The residence is fortunately located near the Philadelphia Society Hill Project, where many other colonial homes are being restored for posterity. The inclusion of Kosciuszko's residence as a National Historic Site in this project would be a magnificent and totally appropriate addition.

Furthermore, while this residence would be established as a National Historic Site to honor the man Kosciuszko, the residence itself is not without historic significance. It was at the Pine Street residence that Thomas Jefferson asked Kosciuszko to undertake a secret mission to France to act as a peacemaker on behalf of the United States. Once again, Kosciuszko responded to America's call for help, accepted this mission from Thomas Jefferson, and secretly left for France on May 5, 1778. It was also at the Pine Street residence that Kosciuszko wrote and delivered to Thomas Jefferson his will and testament in which he bequeathed his fortune for the purchase of the freedom of enslaved blacks. In a day when men were proclaiming the principle that "all men are created equal" while holding other men in bondage,

Kosciuszko, by his will, gave living proof of his dedication and belief in this principle.

Therefore I have joined with sixteen other United States Senators, and twenty-two Congressmen, to introduce legislation to establish the Thaddeus Kosciuszko home at 301 Pine Street in Philadelphia as a National Historic Site. The recent Advisory Board rejection of the Pine Street residence as a National Historic Site clearly demonstrates that our efforts will not be achieved easily. Thaddeus Kosciuszko did not give up in his fight for human freedom, and I will not give up my fight to honor this great man.

I would urge every American who agrees with me that this great patriot should be honored to write to the Secretary of the Interior, The Honorable Rogers C. B. Morton, 18th & C Streets, N.W., Washington, D.C., 20240, demanding that the Advisory Board's decision be reversed. They should also write their Congressmen and Senators, asking for speedy enactment of the bill establishing Thaddeus Kosciuszko's home as a National Historic Site.

By paying tribute to Thaddeus Kosciuszko in this way, we will do more than honor one of the military geniuses of the American Revolution. We will do more than officially recognize the contribution of a beloved son of Poland. We will honor a man whose entire life was a testimony to the freedom for which he fought.

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