

## PRESS RELEASE

- Can you name a great champion of human rights, who was born on February 12th?
- A man far ahead of his time, who hated slavery and advocated for its permanent abolition in America?
- A man described "as pure a son of liberty as I have ever known" by one of this country's great presidents?
- The answer seems simple—Abraham Lincoln, right?
- Good guess, but the correct answer is General Tadeusz Kościuszko! He was born on February 12, 1746.

Kościuszko was a true son of the Enlightenment Age and a hero in the struggle for human rights in the late 1700's. Born in Poland, he studied military engineering in France, volunteered for the cause of American independence and returned to his homeland to fight for freedom there. At a time when many throughout Europe only paid lip service to the principle that "all men are created equal" and many more would not even consider such a radical idea, Kościuszko led the fight, was critically wounded and was imprisoned trying to bring freedom and equality to peasants and Jews in Poland. And at a time when many of our own founding fathers owned slaves, Kościuszko left a will in America directing that his sizable Ohio estate and all other US holdings be sold, with the proceeds used to purchase freedom and education for African slaves in America.

In the early 1900's, Lincoln Park on Milwaukee's South Side was renamed Kościuszko Park and a monument to General Kościuszko was erected, where it has been ever since. The monument's story is nearly as fascinating as the man himself. Even though they had already committed to the daunting task of building the magnificent St. Josaphat church during the 1890's, Milwaukee's early Polish settlers also took on a more secular and smaller (yet still very significant) job at the same time—building a monument to Poland's and America's hero. These early Polish immigrants raised over \$13,000 (roughly \$350,000 in today's dollars) to memorialize Kościuszko with the bronze equestrian statue that still stands today. Thousands contributed whatever they could spare from their meager incomes to help the cause. Once they reached their goal, an estimated 50,000 to 60,000 people attended the dedication ceremony in 1905, including most of Milwaukee's Poles at that time!

However, after more than 100 years, the statue and its base require extensive restoration, cleaning and structural work. Like our grandparents and great grandparents before us, a dedicated group of volunteers has worked for the past five years to privately raise the necessary funds to restore the Kościuszko monument. We are pleased to announce that we have now matched the efforts of our ancestors and will turn our dream into a reality in 2013!

**WHAT:**      **Join us on Kosciuszko's 267<sup>th</sup> birthday, to see his monument lifted from its base and loaded onto a truck headed for the conservation artist's studio in Ohio.**

**WHEN:**      **Tuesday February 12, 2013 @ 1:00 p.m.**

**WHERE:**      **Kościuszko Park at 9<sup>th</sup> Place & Lincoln Avenue.**

Thank you.

Claude Krawczyk, Chairman  
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