

MILESTONES

IN POLISH AMERICAN HISTORY AND CONTRIBUTIONS

2010: U.S. Congress, as well as numerous state legislatures, express their sympathy for the loss in the tragic crash in Smolensk.

2010: U.S. Census concludes the number of people of Polish ancestry is 9,962,234.

2001: War in Afghanistan begins. 2,600 Polish troops fight shoulder to shoulder with American counterparts. Polish Americans also fight in the war.

1999: Poland joins the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

1980: The Solidarity Movement begins in Poland. Polish Americans support the movement by sending hundreds millions of dollars to Poland to help. According to the U.S. Census from that year, the size of the Polish American community was estimated to be more than 8,228,000 persons.

1971: First Papal visit to the United States. Polish Pope John Paul II visits Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Des Moines, and Washington. In all, the Pope visits the United States six times during his career.

1953: Establishment of the National Shrine of Our Lady Czestochowa (also known as the American Czestochowa). Located in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, it is a Polish-American Roman Catholic Shrine.

1952: Jan Karski arrives in the United States. A Polish World War II resistance fighter, Karski is the first person who told Western Europe and the United States about the Holocaust. For over 40 years Karski taught at Georgetown University, focusing in East European affairs.

1939-1944: World War II. 20% of US forces on the eve of the WWII were of Polish descent. It is estimated that 900,000 to 1,000,000 Americans of Polish parentage served in the U.S. Forces during the WWII.

1939: Second wave of Polish immigration begins (1939-1959). Immigrants are mostly political refugees rather than economic emigrants. It is estimated that approximately 250,000 Polish immigrants arrived in the U.S. after World War II.

1922: Foundation of the Polish American Association. The Association is the nation's only human services organization serving the Polish American community in the Chicago-land area.

1919: Polish Embassy opens in Washington D.C. It is located at 2640 16th Street, NW. Establishing the Embassy in the United States is among the first missions of the new Polish government after regaining independence in 1918.

1918: Beginning of US-Poland diplomatic relations.

1912: Creation of Alliance College. The college was founded by the Polish National Alliance to provide opportunities for Polish American to learn about Poland's culture, history, and language. The school was closed in 1987.

1908: Polish National Union is created. It is also known as PNU or Spojnia. The Union is a not-for-profit benefit society organized by the members of the Catholic Church.

1892: First Polish parade in Chicago called the May 3rd Parade is organized by the Association of Polish Clubs. It is the largest Polish parade outside of Poland, held each year on the Saturday prior to May 3rd on Columbus Drive in downtown Chicago.

1865-1900: First wave of Polish immigration to America. The massive immigration "for bread" is primarily for economic reasons. The number of Polish immigrants in the early 1860s is estimated at about 30,000; thirty years later at about 500,000.

1857: Maria Elzbieta Zakrzewska starts the first American Hospital for Women in New York and in 1859 another one in Boston.

1836: During the Texas War of Independence Polish soldiers Michael Dembinski and Frederick Lemsky side with Sam Houston and James Fannin. Felix Wardzinski is credited with capturing the town of Santa Anna during the Texas Campaign of 1836.

1832: Polish railway engineer, Aleksander Bielaski, comes to America to help construct the Illinois Central Railroad. He befriends Abraham Lincoln and later dies in the Civil War.

1779: During the Battle of Savannah on October 9, 1779, General Pulaski is mortally wounded by the blast of a cannon. He dies several days later on October 15, 1779, at the age of 34.

1778: With George Washington's intervention, Congress approves the establishment of the Cavalry and places Casimir Pulaski in command. Pulaski becomes known as the "Father of the American Cavalry."

1778: Thaddeus Kosciuszko is named a chief engineer of West Point, New York. This fortification becomes known as the American Gibraltar and eventually becomes a military academy.

1770: Polish immigrant Jakub Sadowski settles in New York with his sons and becomes one of the first Europeans to explore as far as Kentucky. It is said that Sandusky, Ohio, was named after him.

1608: Arrival of five Polish craftsmen to Jamestown. They include Zbigniew Stefanski – a glassmaking merchant; Stanislaw Sadowski – a water mill constructor; Jan (Jur) Mata – a prominent soap manufacturer; Jan Bogdan – a pitch, tar, and ship construction expert; and Master Michael Lowicki (of London) – the leader of "the five," a nobleman of Polish origin; fluent in both Polish and English. Stefanski and Bogdan save the life of Captain John Smith during a battle with Indians.

2009: General Casimir Pulaski is posthumously proclaimed to be an honorary citizen of the United States (H. J. Res. 26).

2003: War in Iraq begins. 2,500 Polish troops join the U.S. effort; Polish Americans also fight in the war.

2000: U.S. Census results indicate that more than 8,977,444 people of Polish origin live in the United States.

1990: President George Bush grants special trade status with Poland. The Generalized System of Preferences (the GSP) status opens the door for easier trade and interaction between Poland and the United States.

1978: Third wave of Polish immigration to the United States begins. Between 1978 and 1990 approximately 60,000 Polish immigrants arrived in the United States. The inflow of immigrants became known as the "Solidarity Emigration."

1955-1975: Polish Americans participate in the Vietnam War.

1950-1953: Polish Americans participate in the Korean War.

1948: Sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski begins working on the Crazy Horse monument. As of 2010 the monument is still under construction by the Ziolkowski family, who wish that the project is funded solely by public support. Ziolkowski previously assisted in the creation of Mount Rushmore.

1944: The Polish American Congress is founded. Today it is the largest umbrella organization

1937: First Polish parade takes place in New York to commemorate Pulaski Day. The parade passes through Fifth Avenue in New York City and is held the first Sunday of October.

1925: The Kosciusko Foundation is created. Since its inception, the Foundation offers thousands of scholarships to study in Poland as well as for Polish students to study in the US. Today, it is the largest Polish American educational foundation in the US.

1917-1921: World War I:
- Approx. 40,000 of the first 100,000 volunteers who respond to President Woodrow Wilson's call for duty are Polish American.
- 12% of Americans who lost their lives during the WWI were of Polish descent.

1917: Lieutenant General Edward Rowny is born in Baltimore, Maryland in a Polish family. Rowny, an U.S. Army general and an ambassador, was the chief U.S. negotiator in the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, and one of the people who introduced using the helicopter as a platform for combat.

1900: The first US census that references first and second generation Polish settlers.

1900: The Polish Falcons of America is founded, today one of the largest Polish American fraternal organizations.

1898: The Polish Women's Alliance is formed. It is one of the oldest fraternal benefit societies created by women promoting financial security and economic independence.

1880: Foundation of the Polish National Alliance (PNA). Today, the largest Polish American fraternal organization offers insurance plans to Polish Americans nationwide. The PNA's assets are more than \$340,000,000.

1861: American Civil War begins. There were approx. 4,000 Polish fighters in the Union Army including 166 Polish commission officers, and 1,000 Polish soldiers in the Confederate Army including 40 Polish commission officers.

1854: The first Polish settlement in Panna Maria, Texas is founded by Father Leopold Moczygemba and about 100 Silesian families.

1852: Democratic Society of Poles in America is founded, which is the first noted Polish American ethnic organization. By 1854, it numbered over two hundred members.

1828: Corps of Cadets at the West Point Military Academy erect a monument of Thaddeus Kosciuszko at West Point. It is the second monument of Kosciuszko worldwide, the first being the Mount of Kosciuszko in Cracow, Poland.

1783: Thaddeus Kosciuszko is appointed Brigadier General and awarded the Cincinnati Order Medal by General George Washington, Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army. Washington also presents Kosciuszko with two pistols and a sword as gifts for his outstanding service to America.

1777: Casimir Pulaski, a Polish officer "renowned throughout Europe for the courage and bravery he displayed in defense of his country's freedom", arrives in Philadelphia where he meets General Washington, Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army.

1776: Thaddeus Kosciuszko, a Polish engineer, arrives in America. He provides support for the American colonies in their struggle for independence.

1619: On June 30, 1619 the Jamestown Legislative Assembly determines that only colonists of English descent are given the right to vote. As a result the Polish settlers organize what becomes the first labor strike in American history. Their slogan was "No vote. No work". As a result, voting rights were granted to Polish settlers.

