



March 1 Pulaski Day

General *Casimir Pulaski* Hero of the American Revolution - Father of the American Cavalry

The first Monday of March has been designated as CASIMIR PULASKI DAY in Illinois by an act of the General Assembly on June 29, 1977.

Since 1608, when the first Polish settlers arrived at Jamestown, VA, Polish people have been an important part of America's history and culture. They have always embraced the principles of democracy and freedom. The Revolutionary War hero, General Casimir Pulaski, died defending these ideals at the Siege of Savannah in 1779.

General Casimir Pulaski (1745-1779)

Casimir Pulaski, son of Count Joseph Pulaski, was born in Warsaw, Poland, on March 6, 1745. At the age of fifteen, he joined his father and other members of the Polish nobility in opposing the Russian and Prussian interference in Polish Affairs. Outlawed by Russia for his actions on behalf of Polish liberty, he traveled to Paris where he met Benjamin Franklin, who induced him to support the colonies against England in the American Revolution. Pulaski, impressed with the ideals of a new nation struggling to be free, volunteered his services. Franklin wrote to George Washington describing the young Pole as "an officer renowned throughout Europe for the courage and bravery he displayed in defense of his country's freedom. This letter was personally presented to George Washington by General Pulaski in Philadelphia in 1777.

Later, at Brandywine, he came to the aid of Washington's forces and distinguished himself as a brilliant military tactician. For his efforts, Congress appointed him Brigadier-General in charge of all four cavalry regiments. Then, at the Battle of Germantown, Pulaski's knowledge of warfare assisted General Washington and his men in securing victory for American Forces. Later in 1778, through Washington's recommendation Congress approved the establishment of the independent Cavalry and put Pulaski at its head. Pulaski, who became known as the "Father of the American Cavalry", demanded much of his men and trained them in tried and tested cavalry tactics, many of which he used in his fight for freedom in Poland. Pulaski often used his own personal finances, when allocations from Congress were scarce, in order to assure his forces of the finest equipment and personal safety. Pulaski and his Legion were then ordered to defend Little Egg Harbor in New Jersey and Minisink on the Delaware; they then proceeded south to Charleston, South Carolina. It was on October 9, 1779, during the Battle of Savannah, that General Pulaski, charging into battle on horseback, fell to the ground mortally wounded by the blast of a cannon. Pulaski's enemies were so impressed with his courage, that they spared him the musket and permitted him to be carried from the battlefield. Pulaski died several days later on October 15, 1779, at the age of 34. The Pulaski Monuments erected in his honor are located in Monterey Square, Savannah, Georgia and on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, DC between the White House and the Capitol (funded by the U.S. Congress). Recently, on November 6th 2009, General Casimir Pulaski became an Honorary Citizen of the United States through an act of the U.S. Congress.