

Kosciuszko and Strzelecki: The Mountain and the Men!

John Brock (Australia)

Key words: History; Kosciuszko; Strzelecki; Polish Heroes

SUMMARY

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By John F. Brock

brocksurveys@bigpond.com

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ABSTRACT

When Pawel de Strzelecki became the first European to reach the top of the highest peak on mainland Australia his exhilaration conjured up reminiscences of his homeland, Poland, to which he would never return alive. The nostalgic vision of the Kopiec Kosciuszki in Krakow, which was a memorial to the great Polish freedom fighter Tadeusz Kosciuszko, came to his mind compelling him to name this mountain in his honour in a place of freedom and democracy thousands of miles from their home. He also picked a white wild flower as a romantic reflection of his lost love, Adyna Turno, to whom his desired marriage had been blocked by her family. Pawel de Strzelecki only made the long journey back to his hometown of Poznan in western Poland when his remains were exhumed from Kensal Green Cemetery in London, having been buried there in 1873, in a Strzelecki family mission spearheaded by Pawel's descendant from his brother Peter's direct line, Ryszard, with sons John and Les. In 1997 he was laid in the crypt of merit at the Church of St. Adalbert in that quaint village in the country landscape reunited with place of origin, a sacred shrine to which I

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was most honourably escorted by Ryszard and Les in 2006.

General Kosciuszko and his battalion of Polish troops helped George Washington drive the English from US territory, being inspirational in leadership and camaraderie for the victory of the American forces over British occupation in the War of Independence. He was also instrumental in designing and setting out the expansion of the training bastion for future troops at the US States Military Academy West Point, New York.

After leaving Poland, Strzelecki would travel the world, basing himself mainly in London, but certainly making his way to most parts of the globe, in particular Australia between 1839 and 1843. During this period he would carry out many expeditions to the southern Snowy Mountains of NSW and Victoria, as well as mapping and making a physical description of NSW and Van Dieman's Land, publishing a book on this material.

This paper studies the lives of the two great Polish patriots and how their lives were interwoven by adventure, surveying, service to humanity and the dedication to freedom in a world of democratic liberalism.

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