



# { THE BEACON }

**Abuse is no argument: and accusation without proof is no conviction.**

**Thomas Paine (1758)**



*T. Paine*

THOMAS PAINE NATIONAL HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

thomaspaine.org

March 1, 2023

NEW ROCHELLE, NEW YORK

Issue #10

## **The First Paine Celebration at New Rochelle.**

*From The Truth Seeker, October 15, 1927*

The home of Thomas Paine at New Rochelle, which has been made sacred as a literary shrine where the author spent his declining years, is what Mount Vernon was to General Washington, where today hangs the key of that detestable prison known as the Bastille which was presented to the first President of the United States, at the time residing on High street, Philadelphia.<sup>1</sup> The Office of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of which Thomas Paine was secretary was reproduced in exact style and size as it appeared on High Street at the Sesquicentennial which closed last year in Philadelphia.

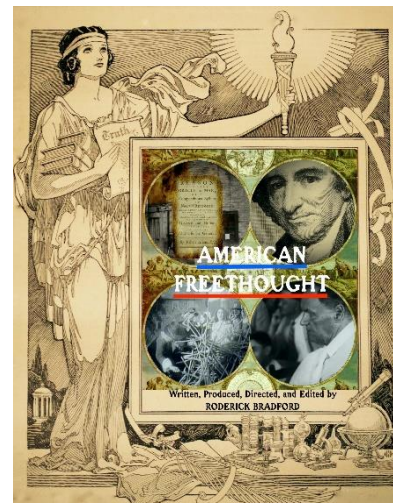
As it may interest some of the Liberals in New York who have attended the many Paine celebrations at New Rochelle, and may be of service in the dedication of the new home of the T. P. N. H. A., I herewith submit the following report of the Independent Order of Liberals of which Peter Eckler was President and Gilbert Vale, secretary. It was also known as the Paine Farm Association, organized as a home for destitute sick Liberals. The house and land remaining was purchased for \$5,500 and \$1,500 of the purchase money has been paid. The number of acres is not given, as the former owner had sold a portion of the farm.

1. TPNHA editor: The key was presented to Paine in France and sent to Washington.

## **American Freethought Part I**

On the February 8<sup>th</sup> Paine Birthday Event at the Thomas Paine Memorial Building in New Rochelle, we showed Rod Bradford's American Freethought Part I, and the discussion of it was cut short because we had the opportunity to exhibit and discuss an amazing artifact: the Sherman copy of the June, 1776 draft of the Declaration of Independence. We strongly encourage everyone to read Jonathan Scheick's research authenticating the document and Paine's role in a position of authority in the Committee of Five. It is on the front page of our website ([www.thomaspaine.org](http://www.thomaspaine.org)).

We will be showing Part II and having a full discussion of both parts I & II on March 8<sup>th</sup>, again at the Memorial Building. A link has been sent to members, and we will follow up with a reminder.





# Paine and Dylan

The only reference to Thomas Paine made by Bob Dylan is the 1967 “As I Went Out One Morning”, on the *John Wesley Harding* album. I started reading Paine after I heard that song.

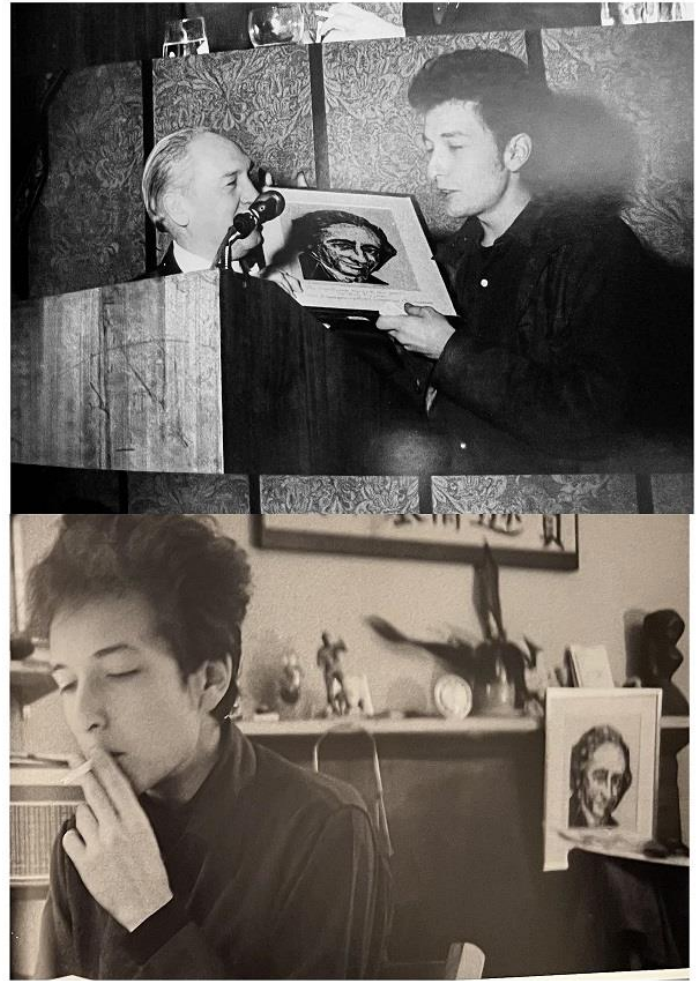
However, every analysis I read about the song only confused me. After researching Paine for 50 years, I can shed some light on it. And the reviews of the song are making even less sense now than then.

The woman in the song is America, and he took responsibility for her. He apologized for her, he was “sorry for what she’s done”. This was in the height of the Vietnam War, also the height of the civil rights upsurge. Paine prophesized later in life that if America loses its morals of equality and justice, that it would be a sad day for all of humanity.

The heart of Paine was equality and justice; he also condemned offensive war as the most heinous crime that can be committed. I commend Dylan for grasping Paine’s essence, and for putting it to use.

He did a much better job than most historians in that time.

Gary Berton, President of the Thomas Paine National Historical Association



Top: Dylan accepting an award from the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee: the Tom Paine Award for Civil Rights in December, 1963.

Bottom: Paine in his office with the picture of Paine.

## Letter to Kitty Few, January 6, 1789.

A thousand years hence (for I must indulge in a few thoughts), perhaps in less, America may be what England now is! The innocence of her character that won the hearts of all nations in her favor may sound like a romance, and her inimitable virtue as if it had never been. The ruins of that liberty which thousands bled for, or suffered to obtain, may just furnish materials for a village tale or extort a sigh from rustic sensibility, while the fashionable of that day, enveloped in dissipation, shall deride the principle and deny the fact.

When we contemplate the fall of empires and the extinction of nations of the ancient world, we see but little to excite our regret than the mouldering ruins of pompous palaces, magnificent monuments, lofty pyramids, and walls and towers of the most costly workmanship. But when the empire of America shall fall, the subject for contemplative sorrow will be infinitely greater than crumbling brass or marble can inspire. It will not then be said, here stood a temple of vast antiquity, — here rose a Babel of invisible height, or there a palace of sumptuous extravagance; but here, ah painful thought! the noblest work of human wisdom, the grandest scene of human glory, the fair cause of freedom rose and fell! T.P.



## Oral History

In the *Time Piece* (a New York newspaper) on March 2, 1798 was the following:

### ANECDOTE OF THOMAS PAINE

It was observed in company to Thomas Paine, that the British and Irish were naturally inclined to monarchy; so much so, that in their convivial meetings they always had a toast master; and that if six of them went to a tavern to drink a bottle of wine, one would be put into the chair, who would collect the bill and pay the waiter, and the rest would benefit by his attention.

Very true, Sir, says Paine, but suppose your six men met every day to drink their bottle, and that they had no more, and the chairman always took a pint to himself: they would soon contrive to drink without one; that is, if they were fond of wine, and had common sense.

### From a Paris newspaper.

(Reprinted in the Aurora, March 10, 1795)

Thibaudeau: We have just exercised a great act of justice in favour of several of our colleagues, but it yet remains for us to do justice to a man who has been one of the chief authors of our constitution, Thomas Paine – that man who has done so much for liberty; he was driven from his seat by the intrigues of an impious faction, under the specious pretext of his being a foreigner, though he had become a citizen of France, by naturalization. He still exists, but in the most extreme misery. I propose that we declare he is not included in the decree which prevents foreigners from holding a seat in the Convention.

It is hereupon decreed, that Thomas Paine is not included in the above mentioned decree, that the Convention receives him again into her bosom, and that he is entitled to receive the arrearages of pay due to him as a member. (*Lively applause.*)

## Arthur O'Connor's Clever Poem

O'Connor, although he inherited an estate and was a member of the Irish Parliament, was an advocate for women's rights, supported emancipation of Catholics although a Protestant, and independence from England. When he joined the United Irishmen fighting British occupation of Ireland, he was arrested.

On his way to prison, he wrote a poem in code. To decipher what he was really saying, here is the code: Take the first line of the first verse, and next the first line of the second verse, the second line of the first verse and then the second line of the second verse, and so alternatively.

"The pomp of courts and pride of kings,  
I prize above all earthly things,  
I love my country but my king  
Above all men his praise I sing;  
The royal banners are display'd,  
And my success the standard aid.

"I fain would banish far from hence,  
The Rights of Man and Common Sense;  
Confusion to his odious reign,  
That foe to princes, Thomas Paine!  
Defeat and ruin seize the cause  
Of Ireland, its liberties and laws."

### Benefactors:

Nimick Forbesway Foundation

J.H. Johnson Charitable Educational Trust

Joy Masoff

Todd Stiefel Foundation

Barbara Crane

Matt & Luann Jacobs



## A necessary evil

Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* begins with a discussion on government; in fact, the content of it in general is about a new form of government. It is a manifesto for a new era, arising from the political economy that is emerging, hampered by feudalism. The Enlightenment has substantially weakened that feudal system, and it was time for someone, like a Thomas Paine, to help push it over. Paine was the last Enlightenment figure, and he built a bridge into the era of the democratic movement that we still live in.

No other progressive figure, no writer on rights, no author of treatises on humane existence, no philosopher like a Price, a Voltaire, a Burke, or a Rousseau did what Paine did: he drew a line in the sand and said no monarchy, ever, and instead it must be a democratic representative system, free from ruling classes. Utopian at first sight, but enduring.

So why would he begin his treatise with this: "Society in every state is a blessing, but government even in its best state is but a necessary evil; in its worst state an intolerable one; for when we suffer, or are exposed to the same miseries *by a government*, which we might expect in a country *without government*, our calamity is heightened by reflecting that we furnish the means by which we suffer. Government, like dress, is the badge of lost innocence; the palaces of kings are built on the ruins of the bowers of paradise."

That first sentence above in the quote is cited by every anarchist and libertarian writer. It is even quoted by good historians, like Jack Fruchtman, as the essence of Paine on government. WRONG. (We saw him on Part I of "American Freethought" saying the "necessary evil" part.)

Paine knew his audience, and he starts exactly where most people were at that time, that government is oppressive, but needed. But he then unfolds a thought experiment, where people inhabit unoccupied land, and set out to form an association to regulate themselves. Throughout the next six paragraphs, Paine reveals a new possibility, which turns government on its head.

In the beginning he stated that the purpose (end) of government is security: "Wherefore, security being the true design and end of government..." After he explains how representative government works for the people, he changes the definition of government by turning it over, and instead of security, it becomes "Here then is the origin and rise of government; namely, a mode rendered necessary by the inability of moral virtue to govern the world; here too is the design and end of government, viz. freedom and security. And however our eyes may be dazzled with show, or our ears deceived by sound; however prejudice may warp our wills, or interest darken our understanding, the simple voice of nature and of reason will say, it is right."

He adds "Freedom" to "Security". Why haven't historians quoted this? It changes the whole point of his argument from a negative to a positive.

Freedom, rights, and equality can only be established through proper government, which is government with a foundation of equality in rights and justice. The rest is propaganda and big lies.

To establish that type of government, it must be by, for, and of the people. (Lincoln, a Paine reader). When Dr. Fruchtman left that out, he leaves the whole point out, Paine's point: government of the people as a whole, however we devise a system to do that (as Paine did leave it to us), is the only way to be free – it is not the absence of government, but the democratic form of government that can guarantee equal rights, opportunity, and yes, freedom. Without that governing structure, we fall prey to con men and women, big lies, autocracies, and constant upheaval.

Don't forget our March 8<sup>th</sup> viewing of Part II of *American Freethought* .

We will have two more viewings of Parts III and IV on the 8's: April 8 and May 8. On June 8<sup>th</sup> its Paine Day in New Rochelle. More info will be coming.