



{ THE BEACON }

"A continual circulation of lies among those who are not much in the way of hearing them contradicted, will in time pass for truth; and the crime lies not in the believer but the inventor."

Thomas Paine



T. Paine

THOMAS PAINE NATIONAL HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

thomaspaine.org

November 1, 2021

NEW ROCHELLE, NEW YORK

Issue #2

Truth Seeker November 4, 1905

The Paine Relic.

The part of the brain of Thomas Paine had in the possession of Dr. E. B. Foote, Jr., at the Paine celebration in New Rochelle, N. Y., on Oct. 14, which was sent from Europe by Dr. Moncure D. Conway to be placed in the monument, is thus described by Dr. Foote, who was chairman of the New Rochelle meeting:

The label* printed for B. Tilley to go on box containing relict of Paine's brain reads thus:

A PORTION OF THE
BRAIN
OF MR.
THOMAS PAINE.

"Tuesday, January 7th, 1833, I went to 11, Bolt-Court Fleet Street, and there with Mr. Gutsell, and Mr. Dean, I saw, at the house of Mr. Cobbett, the remains of Mr. THOMAS PAINE, when I procured some of his hair, and from his skull I took a portion of his brain, which had become hard and which is almost perfectly black."

B. Tilley.

The relict is in tissue paper, in a flat square blue paper box, and on the cover is written, with pen and ink, the following, in the handwriting of Mr. M. D. Conway: "Fragment of Thomas Paine's brain, bought by me in London, 1900. M. D. C." In an article contributed to The Truth Seeker by Mr. Conway in 1902 he acknowledged having paid £5 for this fragment, so rescuing it from the auction mart to find a rest at last in the most appropriate place.

*This label is black print on plain white paper, and measures 2½x2½ inches. The "portion" is convoluted mummified brain tissue, somewhat like an ear in shape, and measures 1¼x1½ inches. It weighs a trifle over a quarter of an ounce.

The Relic now rests under the Paine Monument in New Rochelle, NY, next to our Thomas Paine Memorial Building. TPNHA's plans are to work with the Paine Cottage, also next door, to recreate Paine's gravesite next to the original site. The grave was disinterred by William Cobbett in 1819, months after Nicholas and Marguerite Bonneville visited the grave for the last time before returning to France. Cobbett took the remains back to England, to raise money to advance Paine's philosophy of government, but proceeded to lose them. Only a couple of pieces survived and one of them is this brain relic, the other some hair.

There is a possibility of a third, the skull, which may be in Australia, and we have made attempts, so far unsuccessful, to recover it. This is one project that membership support makes possible: recovery of the skull, and recreation of the gravesite where both relics can be interred properly.

TPNHA Member Zoom, December 7th, 7pm:
Again with One Voice - British Songs of Political Reform, 1766-1868 By Dick Holdstock

Chapter Three of the book is titled, *Paine 1789-1795*. it covers the essential roles Thomas Paine played in those important days that affected the lives of the people of Britain.

Registration invitations will be sent late November.

THE WHIG SOCIETY

Little has been written about the political party formed after Paine's return from the battlefield in January 1777, the Whig Society. The Society, perhaps the first revolutionary party in modern history, took the lead in the politics of the war in 1777 in Philadelphia, then spread to surrounding states, before fading away towards the end of the war.

In a notice in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* on March 25th, 1777:

"At a meeting of the WHIG SOCIETY, held at the Philosophical Hall the first of April, 1777, *Voted unanimously*, That Messrs. Charles W. Peale, James Cannon, David Rittenhouse, Doctor Thomas Young, and Major Thomas Payne [sic], be a Committee of Correspondence for and in behalf of this Society, to correspond with any societies or individuals from whom they may expect to obtain information interesting to our common liberties. *Extract from the Minutes*, THOMAS YOUNG, Secretary." [Young would die on the battlefield shortly afterwards of disease.]

Another active member was also a leader in the Society – Timothy Matlack. These six men had hundreds of close followers and activists. They led the formation of mass-democratic committees formed outside of Congress to organize and mobilize militia groups and represent the militia privates, investigate hoarding, counter the Tory spies in the population, and defend the war by opposing reconciliation with Britain, and to defend the new Pennsylvania Constitution. These were the same men, along with Benjamin Franklin, who fought and won the pamphlet wars in the spring of 1776 that secured the passage of the Declaration of Independence. Matlack was instrumental in forming the local militias and the defense of Philadelphia, later becoming a leader in government. Cannon was a mathematics professor and helped craft the PA Constitution. Peale became the famous American artist, and fought beside Paine in the march across New Jersey in '76. Rittenhouse was the famous American scientist who worked with Paine on gunpowder production and had written articles for Paine's *Pennsylvania Magazine*. And Young was the leader of the Boston Tea Party, and a doctor, hunted by the British there,

he fled to Philadelphia to join Paine.

Led politically by Paine, these six formed the heart of the politics that secured the political strength to win the Revolutionary War. Its primary focus in addition to the above was to defend against the tactics of the Tories who wanted the Pennsylvania Constitution repealed, and against Tory supporters that included "founders" like Rush and Dickinson as supporters of the tactics. That Constitution was the most progressive and democratic probably in history, serving as the model for France's 1793 Constitution (with Paine on its committee) which was never enacted due to the Reign of Terror. Cannon and Franklin were the main architects previous to the formation of the Society, as several historians pointed to Paine as the originator of its unicameral legislature and democratic structures.

A reprinting in the *Pennsylvania Evening Post* on March 20, 1777 of one of the Whig Society's posters in Philadelphia presents its positions:

"*Post introduction: The following articles are handing about in this city, and were the first night signed by upwards of fifty, and since then by a considerable number of the friends of liberty:*

Whereas by the steady perseverance many true friends to liberty, and the public welfare, a happy coalition has affected between the different parties equally solicitous for the welfare of their country, the differing an opinion as to some means not essentially necessary for obtaining it, and there is a fair prospect of the restoration of order and the due establishment of civil legal authority, under which the strength of the state may be collected and exerted, and the inhabitants in every state of life be secured in the possession of peace and prosperity. And whereas it appears that there is nevertheless a scheme now forming to overturn all present order and authority, and to deprive us of the advantages of a militia law for our defense, and to throw our public affairs again into confusion, we, as names are underwritten, in order to prevent the irreparable mischiefs, which must ensue, she the enemy's tour peace succeed, to solemnly engage yourselves to each other, and to the public, that we will most firmly adhere to and abide by the following articles. First, that we will, to the utmost of our abilities, support the just necessary authority of Congress, and the union independence of the American states, against all foreign power and domestic nations whatever.

Secondly, that we will, as far as in us lies, promote peace and good order in the state, and endeavour to bring to justice those who shall attempt to disturb either.

Thirdly, that we will not, by force or violence, or by false

representations, endeavour either to confirm or overturn a part of the present Constitution, contrary to the general sense of the state, but will refer the proof of every part thereof either to a candid reasoning or a fair experiment. Fourthly, then in the mean time we will, to the utmost of our power, support the civil magistrate in the execution of such wholesome laws as are or shall be enacted by the present assembly.

Philadelphia, 18th March 1777."

The Whig Society went on to address Congress to petition it to suppress the activities of the Tory British sympathizers.

Gary Berton



A Symposium Celebrating the Legacy of Thomas Paine, June 16 -18, 2022 in New Rochelle, New York

The Symposium will contribute to a Festival inaugurating the Thomas Paine International Historical Center in New Rochelle, NY. The Center comprises the Thomas Paine Memorial Building, built and maintained by the Thomas Paine National Historical Association (TPNHA), The Thomas Paine Cottage and Museum, owned by the Huguenot and New Rochelle Historical Society, and the Thomas Paine Monument, the oldest monument to a Founder and maintained by the City of New Rochelle. The Center strives to unite public history focused around Thomas Paine and New Rochelle with scholarly study of the legacy of Paine and his impact today, often in cooperation with the Institute for Thomas Paine Studies nearby at Iona College, where the TPNHA Collection is now housed.

Individual presentations and panels will be organized addressing Thomas Paine as a central figure in the history of modern democracy and the philosophy of government, and a major influence on the freethought movement.

Submissions are invited on the following topics:

- **The Works of Thomas Paine**
- **The Transatlantic Impact of Paine's writings and activities**
- **Thomas Paine in New Rochelle**
- **Freethought Movement in America**

There will be a special panel discussion by the Editorial Board of the Collected Works of Thomas Paine Project. See details of the Board at www.thomaspaine.org.

We are interested in presentations by independent scholars as well as academics. While submissions addressing the topics above will be given priority, original papers on other aspects of the impact and legacy of Paine will also be considered.

The Symposium will take place June 17 – 18, 2022. Information about accommodations and other details of the Festival will be provided to all participants, who must be self-funded. A banquet and other social events, family-centered entertainment, and a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Center are all part of the Festival plan, which will draw from the community of New Rochelle and the New York area. Ian Rushkin, creator of the play about Thomas Paine, *To Begin the World Over Again*, will be among the performers.

Send your proposals (less than 500 words) for individual presentations to tpnhamail@gmail.com, with Subject Heading "Presentation Proposal". Panel presentations by organizations and groups may also be accommodated, submitted with subject heading "Panel Proposal". Deadline for submission of papers is March 1, 2022.

You can see the academic posting here: <https://networks.h-net.org/node/73374/announcements/8661835/thomas-paine-international-historical-center-inaugural>

A website for the event will be initiated in 11/21: thomaspainenewrochelle@gmail.com for details on registering and accommodations.

Contact Email: tpnhamail@gmail.com
URL: <http://www.thomaspaine.org>



Bordentown, NJ Statue, erected 1997

The Statue in Bordentown is entitled “The Father of the American Revolution”, it was sculpted by Lawrence Holofcener, who donated his time to allow it to be built. It was placed on the site that Paine’s horse Button grazed while living there at the Kirkbride house. It is also the site of the British invasion of the town, and it was placed there to show who won in the end.

On June 8, 2022, it will be the 25th anniversary of the dedication. TPNHA hopes to be there to recognize the event.

Subscribe to *The Truth Seeker* which was instrumental in the creation of TPNHA, and the resurrection of the legacy of Thomas Paine, and still is.

<https://thetruthseeker.net>

A Conjecture, not a Fact yet

“[Cravenstreet, (London) Dec. 13. 1757]

Dear Sir I have read your Manuscrit with some Attention. By the Arguments it contains against the Doctrine of a particular Providence, tho’ you allow a general Providence, you strike at the Foundation of all Religion: For without the Belief of a Providence that takes Cognizance of, guards and guides and may favour particular Persons, there is no Motive to Worship a Deity, to fear its Displeasure, or to pray for its Protection. I will not enter into any Discussion of your Principles, tho’ you seem to desire it; At present I shall only give you my Opinion that tho’ your Reasonings are subtle, and may prevail with some Readers, you will not succeed so as to change the general Sentiments of Mankind on that Subject, and the Consequence of printing this Piece will be a great deal of Odium drawn upon your self, Mischief to you and no Benefit to others. You might easily display your excellent Talents of reasoning on a less hazardous Subject, and thereby obtain Rank with our most distinguish’d Authors.....I would advise you therefore not to attempt unchaining the Tyger, but to burn this Piece before it is seen by any other Person, whereby you will save yourself a great deal of Mortification from the Enemies it may raise against you, and perhaps a good deal of Regret and Repentance. If Men are so wicked as we now see them *with Religion* what would they be if *without it*? I intend this Letter itself as a *Proof* of my Friendship and therefore add no *Professions* of it, but subscribe simply Yours B.F. [Benjamin Franklin]

Endorsed: Rough of Letter dissuading — from publishing his Piece.”

[From the Franklin Papers at Yale]

Conjecture: We now know Paine was very likely in touch with Franklin at this time in late 1757, Franklin hid the name in making his copy. The status of his “talents” in writing and his views on religion that coincide with his future writings, put Paine as the leading candidate as the recipient of Franklin’s letter. We have searched for such a writing and have not found it in newspapers, maybe Franklin convinced him, at that time at least.

(Memes on the Internet put this letter in the 1780’s – like most things on Paine there, not true. They even say it involved *The Age of Reason*, written in 1794! after BF’s death.)