



{ THE BEACON }

"My country is the world; my religion is to do good."

Thomas Paine



TPaine

THOMAS PAINE NATIONAL HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

thomaspaine.org

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NEW ROCHELLE, NEW YORK

Issue #3

Paine's Birthday Celebration Issue

A history of Paine Birthday Events

When our Association was formed, it was on January 29, 1884, on Paine's birthdate. The people involved had gathered every year on Paine's birthdate, to meet at the Liberal Club in New York City. Rod Bradford at *The Truth Seeker* has discovered that the physical location was at the German Masonic Temple in New York City, (see article on next page), and we were called the Paine Historical Society, soon to be changed to Paine Historical Association, and then to the present name.

It was a regular occurrence across the country for groups to celebrate Paine on his birthday. The first recorded celebration was in 1825 in New York City, then it spread to Boston, Cincinnati, and Rochester. Soon it was commonplace to hold Paine Birthday events across the country. The first celebrations were hosted by both labor groups and freethought groups, and attended by the leading progressives, such as Frances Wright, "the female Thomas Paine," who toured the country as the first female orator, the first feminist activist and freethinker in the 1830s and 40s. All of these celebrations ran counter to a culture of racism, religious fanaticism, and suppressed speech. And they endured on and off for the last nearly 200 years.

Celebrations in New York City in the post WWI era were held at dining rooms in NYC's largest hotels, and hundreds attended, and

organized by TPNHA. After moving to New Rochelle in 1925, and after most of the leading men and women of the TPNHA founders had died, the celebrations became sporadic, but were revived in the late 1990s. Since then the tradition has reestablished the original practice of giving toasts to Paine and what he stood for and accomplished. 1919:



TPNHA promotes and honors his legacy primarily – the man only secondarily. We are not an Association that worships a man, but extolls the legacy. We exist to educate, as historians of the past, and many currently, are slaves to propaganda and false narratives. To correct the legacy of Paine is to bring to the fore the important political and philosophical principles that have shaped history and continue to unfold. His character, which is not important, is praised by all who were close to him; and more importantly, his

enemies define his impact in changing the world: enemies such as autocrats, the greedy, power worshipers, and superstitious demagogues. And Paine became the light for humanity to move forward, and he is condemned for it ... we are correcting that.

NOTICE - January 29, 2022

was supposed to be an in-person celebration at the Thomas Paine Memorial Building and streamed to our members. The pandemic had other ideas, so we are cancelling it as a precaution. However, there will be a Zoom hosted by the Thomas Paine Memorial Association to which we are a part of. Here is the announcement:

"On Saturday, January 29, 2022, at 1:00 PM (PST)/4:00 PM (EST), several hundreds of people will gather on Zoom to celebrate the birthdate of an often-forgotten Founding Father, Thomas Paine. Hailed as a "Freethought Hero," and great patriot, the January 29th event will be, as far as we know, the very first Zoom celebration of his birth. Zoom connections will be made from all over the world and everyone will be invited to deliver a toast in celebration of the life and work of this amazing champion of reason, independent thought, and revolutionary ideas.

The event is presented by the newly formed Thomas Paine Memorial Association (TPMA), a 501(c)3 organization, with the purpose of educating the public and installing a statue of Thomas Paine in Washington, DC, and other places of significance to the life of Thomas Paine. The American Humanist Association, Center for Inquiry, Freedom From Religion Foundation, Freethought Society, and the Thomas Paine National Historical Association are cosponsors.

Actor Ian Ruskin will speak about his experiences portraying Thomas Paine. He will share photos of appearances and will include an overview of his "Walk in the Footsteps of Thomas Paine" that took place in England.

Freethought Society president Margaret Downey will be talking about the many Thomas Paine-themed activities she has sponsored, including her "Walk in the Footsteps of Thomas Paine" that took place in Paris, France.

Sculptor Zenos Frudakis will join the festivities from his studio in Glenside, Pennsylvania and TPMA board members will be introducing themselves. Board members speaking at the event are Gary Berton, Robyn Blumner, Christopher Cameron, Annie Laurie Gaylor, John de Lancie, Marnie Mosiman de Lancie, Ann Druyan, Thomas Legg, and Julia Sweeney.

Closing remarks will be delivered by Congressman Jamie Raskin.

Folksinger James Klueh will perform two Thomas Paine-themed songs ("Tom Paine's Bones" and "Liberty Tree") prior to the interactive social hour.

Register for this event at:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwpdeCurj8tG9U-4tRxN-SaOQAZOX4KHHlt> "

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SATURDAY, - - - JANUARY 26, 1884.

Paine's Birthday

Will be observed by the Freethinkers of New York city on Tuesday evening, the 29th inst., at German Masonic Temple, 220 E. 15th street, under the auspices of the Bennett Liberal League. There will be speaking by S. P. Andrews, Mr. Adams, S. P. Putnam, and T. B. Wakeman if he returns from Boston in season to attend. Music will be furnished by Miss Leona Leonard and others. It is also proposed to found a Paine Historical Society, and the initiatory steps will be taken on this evening.

The expenses of this meeting are defrayed by contribution. Heretofore it has happened that a few have borne almost the whole burden. Those who feel like helping may remit such sums as they can spare to the treasurer of the Bennett League, G. E. Macdonald, in care of THE TRUTH SEEKER.

It should need no urging to bring out a full house on occasions of this kind, and it is hoped that every friend of Paine who can will attend. The Bennett League proposes to celebrate Washington's birthday with a sociable, and we should all get acquainted so as to enjoy that event. The evening of the 29th will be a fitting time to do it.

From The TRUTH SEEKER,
December, 1943:

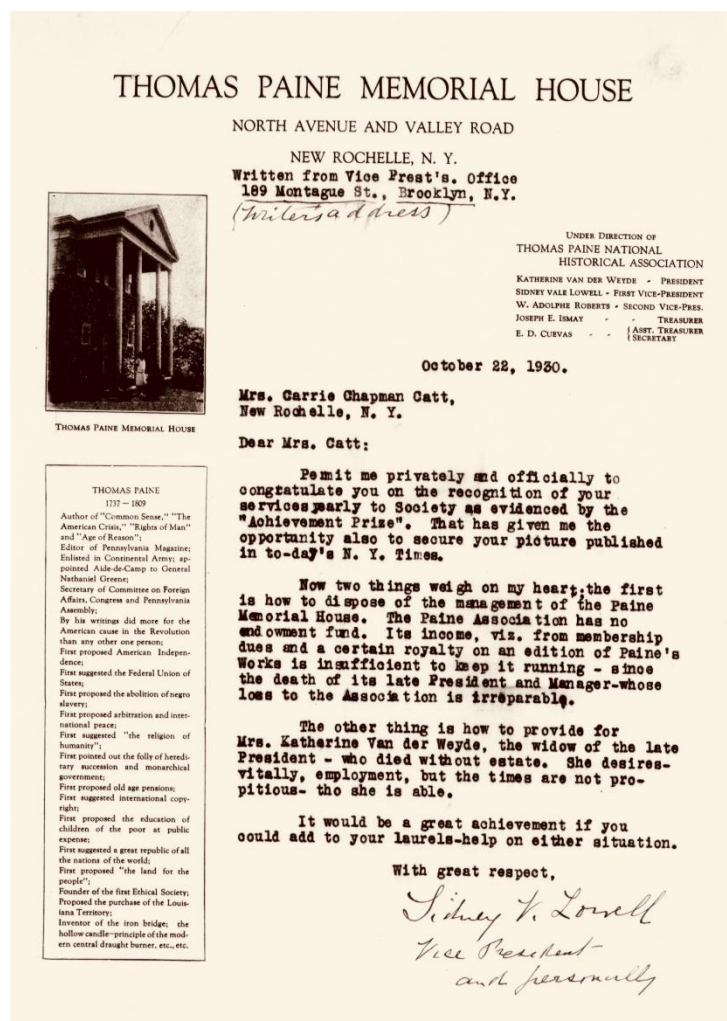
Next month comes a birthday, or the 207th anniversary of one, that can be celebrated conscientiously; for authorities agree that Thomas Paine was born January 29th, 1737, and without supposition he was the son of Joseph, that is a Joseph of his name, though he spelled it Pain. With me of late the years go by, or into the dim vista of chronological Time, with accelerated speed, the more recent ones in a huddle, but it seems to me the name of Paine has appeared oftener in the public press this year than in any other since 1909, which was the centenary of his death and the centenary also of a number of distinguished men's birth, Abraham Lincoln among them; and it is said that Paine's writings were Lincoln's early reading. For that year of 1909 Leonard Abbott, Freethinker and idealist, was an editor of the Literary Digest, and I credited him with a summary of opinion on Paine one hundred years after, which on the whole he pronounced favorable. An allusion to the author-hero in my daily paper on October 24, "ultimo," with a side head in capitals, reads as follows: "PRODIGAL SON: Americans

remember English-born Thomas Paine as a key figure in the American Revolution. Last week a plaque to the memory of this simple son of England was unveiled in Thetford, his birthplace. The plaque was presented by a group of Americans."

The simple son of England was prodigal of his genius, but his experience did not parallel the gospel prodigal's (Luke 15), for when Paine "arose and came to his father" he was chased away. Also he returned to the far country, America, and was disowned as a citizen. But thanks to the writer of the paragraph, who rescues his given name and respectfully calls him Thomas."

The second allusion, dated at New Rochelle, N.Y., October 26, occurs in the report of a non-partisan campaign speech by Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt, suffragist, now aged 84, "at the Paine Memorial Building" — for which ground was broken by the late Thomas A. Edison on Memorial Day, 1925, probably without design just a century later than the first Thomas Paine birthday celebration held in America.

That day in New Rochelle, "among distinguished speakers" were Dr. David Saville Muzzey, Columbia College history professor, and Norman Thomas, who as a good Paineite still, got my complimentary presidential vote by naming the "key figure in the American Revolution" along with Washington, Jefferson and Franklin as one of the "founders." Dr. Muzzey, in his American History book, studied by two of my descendants, gives a page to England's simple son, concluding that the producers of the Revolution were Thomas Paine and King George the Third.



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Excerpts from the speech in New York City on January 29, 1884 by S.P. Putnam, co-founder of TPNHA:

“Liberty demands self-defense, but nothing more.

When self-defense is accomplished, then brute force should cease. Reason and moral power are then the victorious agencies. The French people, degraded by centuries of servitude, could not see this. Having drawn the sword, they expected to win everything by the sword. They made that the arbiter. The commanding and penetrating genius of Paine saw otherwise - that the sword should be put aside as soon as possible, and reason left to assert the claims of justice. ... What is liberty without justice, and what is justice but the moral power of man? Brute force can simply resist; it cannot advance. Moral ideas must proceed by moral forces. The ultimate advance of mankind must be by reason. It was to reason that Paine constantly appealed. It was not the expediency of today for which he aimed, but for the eternal justice, whose light, like that of the sun, must fall both upon the just and the unjust, not for vengeance, but for the progress and joy of all. Paine was far-reaching in his ideas. They belong to the future: they look onward. In recalling his life, we do not dwell altogether in the past. In the light of his lofty genius we see the days that are to come. He is our leader still, our teacher still. We can gather impulse and knowledge from his eventful career. He has touched strings that will vibrate music in the hereafter. He is a living and onward power - not merely a monument of achieved result, for that life which he communicated to the human race was not simply that of his own personality, but the life of great ideas, which are immortal, and which from the splendors of the past lure to nobler achievement. No matter what we have done, there still remains a greater, and to this so long as man advances, will the name of Thomas Paine be an incentive.”

From Dick Holdstock's *Again with One Voice*

A song by Joseph Mather, to the tune of *God Save the Queen*, “showing support for Tom Paine’s *Rights of Man* and reflecting the republican sentiment immediately understood by working people.” From the mid 1790s, in the face of brutal repression by the British crown.

God Save the Great Thomas Paine

God save great Thomas Paine,
His “Rights of Man” to explain
To e’ry soul.
He makes the blind to see,
What dupes and slaves they be,

And points out liberty
From pole, to pole.

Thousands cry “church and king”
That well deserve to swing,
All must allow;
Birmingham blush for shame,
Manchester do the same,
Infamous is your name,
Patriot’s vow.

Pull proud oppressors down,
Knock off each tyrant’s crown,
And break his sword;
Down with aristocracy,
Set up democracy,
And from hypocrisy
Save us good Lord.

Why should despotic pride
Usurp on every side?
Let us be free;
Grant freedom’s arms success,
And all her efforts bless
Plant thro’ the universe
Liberty’s tree.

Facts are seditious things
When they touch courts and kings
Armies are raised,
Barracks and bastilles built,
Innocence charged with guilt,
Blood most unjustly spilt,
Gods stand amaz’d.

Despots may howl and yell,
Tho’ they’re in League with hell
They’ll not reign long;
Satan may lead the van,
And do the worst he can,
Paine and his Rights of man
Shall be my song.

Excellent book.

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