



# { THE BEACON }

“Man cannot make principles, he can only discover them.”

Thomas Paine



*T. Paine*

THOMAS PAINE NATIONAL HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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## Bailyn: Part 1

In the last *Beacon*, we introduced the shortcomings of some historians, especially as they relate to Thomas Paine. There is a preponderance of faulty historiography about Paine, and this is why our Association was founded to correct it (along with the practical aspects of uniting the various progressive groups).

Bernard Bailyn produced a book in the late 1760s, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, which represents the conservative view of history. In it, Paine is incompletely addressed, while the conservative view of the Revolution is promoted. But in his scholastic search for some semblance of truth, he stumbled upon a key work which he describes as “remarkably original and cogent”. That work, which Bailyn refers to ten times in the book, was *Four Letters on Interesting Subjects*. He makes a case throughout his book how this work Americanizes the discussion of government and constitutions.

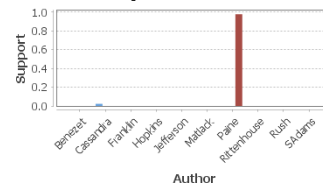
*Four Letters* was written by Thomas Paine. Bailyn also refers to another pamphlet written at the same time as equally influential, *The Genuine Principles of the Anglo Saxon or English Constitution* – that pamphlet was written by Thomas Young, Paine’s close comrade in the struggles to get the Declaration of Independence passed.

While praising these works which created the American creed of government, Bailyn minimizes Paine throughout the book, and I doubt he would have praised *Four Letters* to the extent he did, if he had known that Paine was the author.

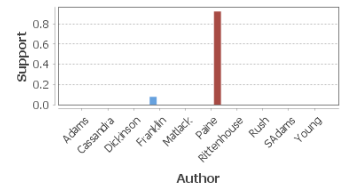
So how do we know Paine wrote it? In 1983, A. Owen Aldridge wrote *Thomas Paine’s American Ideology*, a book strongly recommended. In there he devotes an entire chapter on proving Paine wrote *Four Letters*, by comparing intellectual

concepts with his other works, and their formulations. In addition to his analysis, the text analysis of *Four Letters* shows it very clearly: here are sample tests from the examination:

Comparison of Supports for “4 letters plain”  
Accuracy Threshold: 62%



Comparison of Supports for “4 letters plain”  
Accuracy Threshold: 62%



Bailyn never addresses Paine seriously until page 285, in the final chapter, which is titled “The Contagion of Liberty”, where he minimizes the political theory of Paine and drowns it in the opposition to his works by others more sympathetic to Bailyn’s way of thinking. The title of the chapter should give a hint as to its content. That will be addressed in the next *Beacon*.

## Diego Rivera’s Mural Panel of the American Revolution

Diego Rivera was a famous Mexican artist in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He excelled in large public murals, and also did hundreds of paintings on a smaller scale. He died in 1957 in Mexico City.

His most controversial project was the mural he created for the Rockefeller Center in New York City. His politics were overlooked by the Rockefeller family (Rivera was a member of the Communist Party in the 1930s), because of his celebrity, but Rivera refused to compromise his politics, and eventually the mural was destroyed rather than be exhibited. The title of the work was *Man at the Crossroads*, and it depicted workers, with social and political choices visibly represented. When he inserted figures like Lenin and Trotsky, it put an end to the project.

Rivera anticipated that his mural would be destroyed before it could be displayed, which it was. So Rivera had pictures taken, in black and white, of the panels, and the whole mural. He then returned to Mexico and re-created the mural for the [Palacio de Bellas Artes](#) in Mexico City. He renamed it *Man, Controller of the Universe*. See below:



As part of the exhibit at the Thomas Paine Memorial Building, we included the panel that depicts the American Revolution. This panel did not become part of Rivera's final production for Mexico City, as it pertained to the U.S. The only thing that remains of it is the black and white photo. Here is Rivera working on this panel in 1933:



The finished panel:



The knowledge that Rivera displays here is impressive. He must have studied Paine to grasp his significance, his close relationship to Franklin (standing next to him), his foundational principle of equality as the basis of his thought (with all the races standing together pointing to *Rights of Man*), the significance of Crispus Attucks being martyred, and the militant attitude toward a foreign power invading a supposedly weaker country.

## TO THE CITIZENS OF THE U. STATES. **LETTER THE EIGHTH.**

*Excerpt from the Aurora, June 5, 1805.*

### [Paine on investigating an ex-President.]

When I returned to America in November 1802, (after an absence of more than fourteen years) I found the country in a state of disquietude. The people were divided into two classes, under the names of *republicans* and *federalists*, and in point of numbers appeared to be nearly balanced. The republicans were the majority in congress, and all the administration were of that description; but they were assailed with outrageous abuse in the federal papers, but never by argument. I am enough acquainted with life and the world, to know, that *abuse* is the evidence of *want of argument*, and that those who use it, have no right on their side. There is a dignified calmness in conscious rectitude, which descends not to abuse. It can reason but it cannot rage. It cannot quit the strong fortress of rectitude to skirmish in the fields of vulgarity.

It was not difficult to perceive, that this division and agitation arose from some reports spread during the administration of John Adams, and in the latter time of General Washington, which one part of the people believed, and the other did not; and the point to be ascertained was whether those reports were true or false. If either of those cases could be ascertained effectually, it would unite the people. The chief of those reports, was the danger of an *invasion* from France; and this was made a cause for borrowing, by loan, at the high rate of *eight per cent.* laying on a land tax of two million dollars annually; besides a greater number of other taxes; and for raising a standing army of fifty thousand men.

Now, if the danger was real, it ought to have been provided against. If it was a fiction, with the design of raising an army to be employed to accomplish some concealed purpose, the country ought to be informed of it. The party stiling themselves



federalists appeared to believe the danger, and the republicans to ridicule it as fabulous; and in this state the parties stood. It was, however, equally the interest of both, to know the truth, on which ever side the truth might fall.

Being at Washington in the winter of 1802-3, I talked with some members of congress on the subject, particularly with Mr. Breckenridge, senator from Kentucky, the same person who brought in the bill for repealing John Adams' judiciary law, and the midnight appointments made in the consequence of it. — This repeal saved the country *thirty-two thousand dollars annually*, besides freeing it from an intended judiciary despotism.

I spoke to him of the propriety of congress appointing a committee, or by some other method as they might think proper, to enquire into the conduct of the former administration, that of John Adams, and to call upon him to produce the information whether official or otherwise, which he went upon, if he had any, for putting the country to such vast expence, under the idea, real or pretended, of an invasion from France. This would be giving John Adams a fair chance of clearing himself, if he could, from the suspicion that his administration was a gross imposition on the public; and on the other hand, if the imposition should be proved, it would enlighten the country, and put it on its guard against future impositions.

Mr. Breckenridge agreed with me in the propriety and fitness of the measure. He saw that information was wanted, and that it would be useful, because when the truth should be known, it would compose the people. John Adams had gone away in what may be called a *clandestine manner*, without surrendering into the hands of his successor, as he ought to have done in person, any account of the affairs of the executive department, foreign or domestic. There are no papers or documents that I know of, and I believe there are none, because there can be none in the secretary of state's office, that will justify John Adams in the expence to which his administration put the country; or even afford ground for suspicion that either France or England intended to invade the United States. For what purpose then was an army to be raised. The projectors of such a measure must have had some object in view, and as that object has never been explained, it ought to be enquired into. It is bad policy, and also a bad precedent, especially in public affairs, to let imposition slide away without detection.

At the time I talked with Mr. Breckenridge on this subject, I expected that Mr. *Skipwith* formerly and

at this time, American consul at Paris, and *Joel Barlow* would soon arrive, and I did not wish the enquiry to be gone into till they came. After the fall of Robespierre and the establishment of the directory constitution, these two gentlemen and myself (Mr. Monroe being recalled) had better opportunities of knowing the sentiments and intentions of the French government with respect to America than other persons had ; and they can be evidence equally with myself, that no intention existed in the French government to invade America ; nor was any preparation made for such an attempt, nor could it be made.

The possibility of such a thing did not exist. The French navy at that time was nearly annihilated; her ports blockaded by the British; and she had to fight by land, single handed, against almost the whole of Europe. She had it not in her power to spare a *regiment*, much less could she spare an *army*, to send to America; and if she could have spared one, she had not the means of transporting it, nor the convoy to protect it. All the circumstances as well as the evidence that can be provided, will show that the administration of John Adams was a fraudulent and expensive imposition on the country; and that the army to be raised was intended for some secret purpose, and not for the purpose of defence. If John Adams was not conscious of something wrong, and apprehensive of some consequences, why did he abscond in the hasty and private manner he did? or why did his partizans want to put Aaron Burr in the presidency. In the days of the black cockades John Adams had one so enormous and so valiantly large, that he appeared to be suspended by it; but when his *midnight hour* arrived, his valor fled and himself also.

[You can find the full essay on [www.thomaspaine.org](http://www.thomaspaine.org).]

## Update on the D.C. Paine Statue

Followers of the Thomas Paine National Historical Association will be pleased to know that the long-delayed plans to build a Paine statue in Washington D.C. are moving forward. The project is spearheaded by the Thomas Paine Memorial Association (TPMA) who are working to pass House Bill 6720 that authorizes TPMA to establish a commemorative monument dedicated to Thomas Paine in the District of Columbia. In the last few weeks, there have been several significant advancements of the legislation.

The Bill was originally introduced on February 11, 2022 by Representative Jamie Raskin (D-MD). On September 16, 2022, Representative Victoria Spartz (R-IN) became a co-leader of the Bill. The recent addition of Representative Spartz and Representative Jay Obernolte (R-CA-8) makes House Bill 6720 a truly bipartisan effort.

Details of the Bill and the list of sponsors can be found at this link:

<https://bit.ly/HR6720Bill>

The proposed monument, like every proposed Washington, D.C. monument and museum, must be presented to the National Capital Memorial Advisory Commission (NCMAC) for their consideration. TPMA spokespersons conducted a presentation to NCMAC on July 27, 2022. This link will take you to a recording of the actual hearing, discussion and vote:

<https://youtu.be/ZJJNu4mfUbA>

In the video you will see presentations from (in order of appearance) Congressman Raskin, Mark Dann from the Freedom From Religion Foundation's Director of Governmental Affairs, president of TPMA Margaret Downey, president of the Florida Veterans for Thomas Paine Gene Jones, legal fellow of the Freedom From Religion Foundation Karen Heineman, president of Black Nonbelievers Mandisa Thomas, and intern at the Freedom From Religion Foundation Charis Hoard. All speakers present, supported the proposal. After hearing the presentations, the Commissioners voted unanimously to support a memorial project to recognize Thomas Paine's important impact on American history. TPMA thanks the following members of NCMAC for their advocacy in favor of the Thomas Paine memorial project: Edwin Fountain, Joe Imamura, David Maloney, Peter May, Paul McMahon, Michael Sherman, and Mina Wright. A letter from NCMAC Chairman May was sent to the Chairman of the House Natural Resources Committee, Congressman Raúl M. Grijalva (D-AZ).

The letter stated, in part:

"This letter is intended to fulfill the

requirements of Section 8903(d) of that Act, which states that the Congress shall solicit the views of the Commission in considering legislation authorizing commemorative works within the District of Columbia and its environs.

"The Commission discussed H.R.6720 and quickly agreed that Thomas Paine's legacy rises to the level of 'lasting historical significance' to the American people, as required by the Act. Commissioners generally voiced surprise that a commemorative work to honor Thomas Paine had not already been established in Washington, DC. Several commissioners noted the importance of Paine's relevance to a variety of viewpoints and political philosophies; one commissioner observed that Paine was a 'tent of compassion.' The Commission concluded its review by unanimously supporting H.R.6720 with no recommended changes."

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