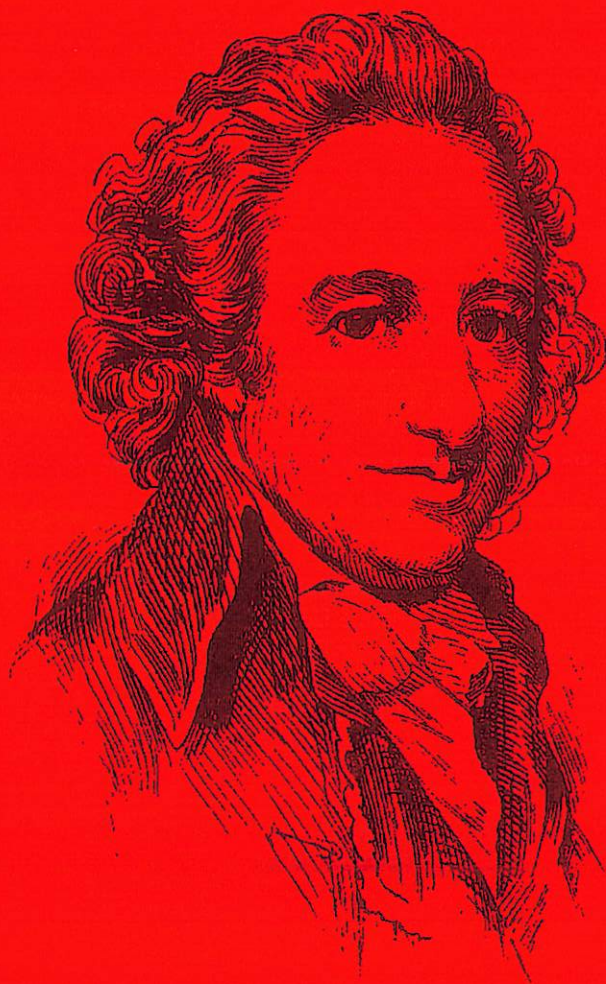


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TOM PAINE, ARCHITECT – ENGINEER & HIS IRON BRIDGE

Tom Whelan

INTRODUCTION

We are fortunate to live in an era when the name “Tom Paine” is well known to virtually every high school and college student in America, and to a great many more students throughout the English speaking world, and the empire of France, parlayed into a worldwide reading public. Paine was a confidant and advisor to George Washington, Napoleon, and Thomas Jefferson. As the author of well respected books and pamphlets, letters and moral essays, Paine offers generation after generation his fiery eloquence, hammering away at vital issues of the American War for Independence, and then for the issues surrounding France’s revolutionary and post-revolutionary governments. Paine’s biographers, from Thomas Clio Rickman, 1819,¹ and Calvin Blanchard, 1885,² to the latest biographical work, that is John Keane’s award winning *A Political Life* of 1995,³ have captured the basic facts of Paine’s writing life, that is, that he was not wholly a geopolitical writer, not entirely a social philosopher, and not just a highly accomplished author of pamphlets, but that Paine should have been credited with innovations and ingenious applications of wrought iron and cantilevered bridging techniques that are worthy of respect, and professional accreditation by constructors, engineers and architects, from his day to ours.

For an example of a Paine inspired iron bridge, see Figure 1, Iron Bridge Over the wear River at Sunderland. [The Wear Bridge Design was based upon Paine’s Model and Wrought Iron Structure, Paddington, England.]

TABULATING PAINE’S ARCHITECT-ENGINEER ACHIEVEMENTS

When surveying Paine’s many non-engineering writings, from among the titles that made him famous, such as *Common Sense*, *The Crisis*, his other pamphlets, *Rights of Man* – Parts 1 & 2, *Age of Reason* – Parts 1 & 2, and other writings, it is evident that his massive political and philosophical accomplishments have tended to submerge and thus overshadow his work in the world of technology.

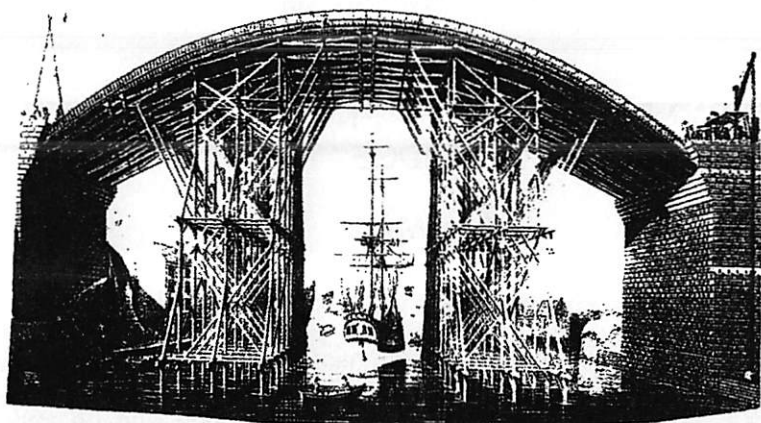


Fig.1.

The Iron Bridge over the Wear River, Sunderland, County of Durham, based on Paine's model bridge, and his wrought iron bridge structure as displayed at Paddington. Image from a 1796 lithograph from the [British] Institute of Engineering. The two mastered ship is shown for scale. Note the mirror image wooden superstructure used to support the bridge structure under construction.

It is unfortunate in the 21st Century that Paine's technical writing skills have gone unrecognized. Intellectual stimulus was certainly in the air. From 1750 until 1772, *L'Encyclopedie* edited by Denis Diderot with conspicuous help from Voltaire, brought a water shed of technology, intellectual property, manufacturing, crafts and trades into public view. We can imagine with what delight Paine would view *L'Encyclopedie*, rich with engineering knowledge as well as the rational new wealth of philosophy of from Voltaire. Here, in these pages, where the focus and emphasis will be on Paine's scientific technical work –that is his architectural and engineering skill – we will sort out and identify how Paine's technical life was over-laid on the political. If a mental picture of this division of his mental capacity would be helpful, we can imagine the plans of an iron ship, each space compartmentalized and shut off from the others – for Paine's intellectual life, there are whole years where his intense bridging building and metallurgy innovations at the iron works seem to determine the direction of his life. Yet in other sealed off compartments, we see more years where the turbulence and mayhem from the American Revolution simply seized the rudder of his life. And then - just when he was back on track with his bridge building and engineering, Paine was again pulled asunder and thrown headlong into that most dangerous compartment of his life, the French Revolution.

The Paine biographers cited above are generally well aware of his trip to France and England starting in 1787, Paine's up and down popularity amidst the Revolutionary French, his imprisonment, with his freedom gained through

Ben Franklin's intervention, and at last a safe passage bound for America in 1794. What is not well spelled out and documented are *the interim years* of Paine's European Voyage 1787 – 1794, and his later years in the French legislature. By early 1787, Paine had prepared himself exceptionally well for his European Voyage by making three scale model miniature bridges of his iron bridge, over the Schuylkill River, in Philadelphia, to both serve as demonstrations of what his actual bridges would look like. These models were also to file with English and French government agents whom we would today call Patent Officers, along with his applications to be granted copyrights and trade mark patents – where the models would be lawful requirements – to accompany the paperwork for official study and review. In England, the topic of bridges was hot – the stately Blackfriars Bridge had fallen into the Thames, along with two older and lesser bridges. Iron bridging technology was a welcome topic when Paine landed in England.

The first model bridge Paine exhibited was made in wood, that is mahogany of the finest quality, workmanship and lustre. This is the model left with the French where it was displayed with great admiration and interest at the Louvre for technical assessment, and for public display. The mahogany model was the one chosen to show to the French Academy of Science, where many of the eminent scientific intellectuals of French society had offices. Quoting Calvin Blanchard, "This model received the unqualified approbation of the Academy, and it was afterwards adopted by the most scientific men of England."⁶

Thanks to Paine, the history of iron bridges can thus be dated to begin in England in 1787. He reserved the other two bridge models for later use, the one in cast iron being next placed with the English authorities for patents and trademarks in London, also in 1787. This model was another mandatory submittal for the patent application process, thus leaving its creator with only one model left, which was made of wrought-iron, connected with blocks of wood shaped and painted to emulate cast-iron blocks. He carried this model about for some time as a talking piece when queried by learned constructors and engineers. The mahogany bridge model at the Louvre was proposed for an arch bridge, with a 400 foot span. In England, Paine contracted for and had built bridge after his cast iron model, made from five cast-iron arch ribs, each of 110 feet in length, on a site outside London. In 1789, he designed, fabricated and load-tested another bridge trial rib. By 1790, a complete wrought iron and cast iron bridge of Paine's design of some 36 tons was assembled and on display on Paddington Green, for a period exceeding a year, but with Paine by then stranded in Revolutionary France and committed to a post in the French government, the financing and business management arrangements of his engineering projects went askew, and the wrought iron

and iron segments of Paine's bridge were sold for the benefit of creditors.

Nonetheless, Paine's iron achievements at Paddington Green had become the prototype for iron other bridges, the best known of which is the well known Wear Bridge at Sunderland, England in 1796. Bridge architects and engineers are also beholden to Paine for cantilevered bridging techniques, which have been wide spread since the 1800's in England first, then all of Europe and the US. Today, there are several collections of wrought iron and iron bridges that have been named as historic structures after the Paine concepts, the most numerous in England, some in France and Spain, six have been itemized in the USA, and many in Russia by special selection by Czarina Catharina, the former German princess Katharina, called "The Great" for her technical choices and innovations and for her artistic patronages. Last, in the legacy and heritage of Paine's bridge thinking, typifying cantilevered principles, there is the first iron bridge in America, constructed in 1839 - and still in service - the Dunlap Creek Bridge, Brownsville, Pennsylvania.⁷

WE DIGRESS – PAINE'S ROOTS IN AMERICA & HIS EDUCATION

Paine's bridge story does not simply go to England, then France, then return, a mere exodus back to America. Not unexpectedly, it would be back home in these new United States where Paine would reinvigorate and regain his engineering and planning momentum for iron bridges, but did culminate in his proposals to President Jefferson and the Continental Congress to install iron bridges, along with their accompanying canals and roads – a virtual road map for invigorating a new nation with a vigorous commercial transportation network. In his notes on his 1803 proposals to Congress, he mentions that he had requested without response the prompt return of his iron, and wrought iron models from England for illustrative demonstrations in America. It is generally believed that his mahogany bridge model still resides in the Louvre, in Paris.

It remains for Paine scholars, probably focused at the Pennsylvania universities, to pursue the whole of Paine's writing from The Library of Congress, Office of Patent & Trade Mark, Smithsonian Technical and Scientific Museum, Thomas Jefferson Presidential Papers and archives, Ben Franklin papers and archives, British Engineering Society, and the records of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania bridge contracts and construction work centres. Likewise, French scholars of technology may want to sift Paine's bridge technology work out from his political activities, and using official records, account for marks of Paine's technical skill sets on the French nation, and its bridges, canals and road networks.

Other Paine-inspired projects were built in later years after his death in the United States. John Keane, Paine's excellent biographer, credits Paine with bringing the engineering for cantilevered bridges to the new world. One such example was built at Bordentown, New Jersey in 1820, and served as a model for cantilevered techniques for a century. Paine has been praised for his foresight as "the father of all great structures that now serve human convenience everywhere." A lot of ink has been splashed about with special regard to Paine's parents, upbringing, family trade, schooling, and expertise in youth without focusing these diverse factors into a harmonic blend of what made up Paine's intellectual character, his work ethos, and his broad and deep knowledge of the arts and sciences. Mr. Rickman holds that Paine's attendance at a respectable Latin School was the only formal education he received in England. This may be so, but better Latin schools of the day also had roots and channels to the study of algebra and geometry beyond simple mathematics; and with Latin comes the language masters like Virgil, historians like Seneca, political genius such as Julius Caesar – whose wooden and rope bridge across the Rhine River sparkles among Caesar's achievements from The Gallic Wars; and then, numerous translations of Vitruvius's technical text book, *De Architectura*, were in circulation. Budding mathematicians and bridge builders and architects would have certainly taken Vitruvius to heart in their youth and studied his works throughout life. To think Paine a man of limited intellect, stamina or drive would be to grossly underestimate him. As Blanchard tells us, "During his suspension [of 1764] from [his job as an excise officer] that he repaired to London, where he became a teacher in an academy kept by Mr. Noble of Goodman's Fields; and during his leisure hours, he applied himself to the study of astronomy and natural philosophy. He availed himself of the advantages which the philosophical lectures of Martin and Ferguson afforded, and made the acquaintance of Dr. Bevis, and able astronomer of the Royal Society."

The University of Philadelphia recognized Paine's technical knowledge with the award of a Master's Degree in 1787, and he was also admitted to Membership in the Philosophical Society that year, 1787, shortly before he embarked with his bridge models to France and England. By this time, thanks to his editing and writing, he was very popular among the public and quoting Blanchard, "[Paine] enjoyed the esteem and friendship of the most literary, scientific and patriotic men of the age."

It is noteworthy that both British and French formal educational institutions made good and sufficient distinguished awards to him as to any learned professor, master, or doctor of arts & sciences in his era. That the British patent office granted him the British patents on his iron bridge by 1789 is a hallmark distinction before all of Britain's industry and the law, recognising him

the legitimate inventor and owner of the technologies described by Paine and modelled by him for the British patent office.

It would seem that Paine was one of those technocrats whose education never stopped, and that he absorbed a great deal of geopolitical and diplomatic knowledge from his writing and editing of the revolutionary materials for the American war for independence, then embellished his mind and pragmatic skills the upper mathematics and construction sciences, to rank amongst the most skilled engineers of his era, be it London, Paris or Philadelphia. It is ironic that Paine's skill and determination in engineering, architecture, science and technology, iron mongering, smelting – the well hammered bolts and rivets, hot & sweaty, from the grimy anvil was precisely what brought Paine to England and France, not his pamphlets and politics. Here is truly an original genius worthy of the rank and title of professional engineer.

PAINE'S LETTER TO GEORGE WASHINGTON OF MAY 1st, 1790

This letter is from London, to Paine's Commander, Benefactor & Friend, further FROM LONDON – A TRANSMITTAL LETTER TO PAINE'S COMMANDER, BENEFACTOR & FRIEND, further, promises the Key to The Bastille to Washington; and important bridge news. An unusual and brief letter of only five paragraphs and a footnote tell us today so much about the relationship between Washington and Paine, what made them compatriots, kindred spirits, and Amici, in revolutionary French terms, that we pause here to read with Washington these words of Paine:

"Sir: Our very good Friend, the Marquis de la Fayette has entrusted to my care the Key of the Bastille and a drawing handsomely framed, representing the demolition of that detestable prison as a present to your Excellency, of which his [Marquis de la Fayette] letter will particularly inform [you]." [This is the one and the same key had shut up from freedom, and sent to torture and death so many brave revolutionaries and persons of free thought in France for generations. This key, in and of itself is emblematic of the worst elements of kingship, aristocracy, faux aristocracy, and the engines of the police state which whip and flog, hang and guillotine, pull the teeth and nails of the plebiscite, and the fact that Paine has successfully argued for its disposition to be made not only in The New World, but in the American hands of General Washington – this is no small miracle. The Louvre or other museums or national galleries in France, Britain would have been worthy repositories, then and now.] The letter continues:

"I feel myself happy in being the person thro' whom the Marquis has conveyed

this early trophy of the Spoils of Despotism and the first ripe fruits of American principles transported into Europe to his great Master and Patron. He [the Marquis] mentioned to me the present he intended [to] you [that] my heart leaped with Joy – It is something so truly in character that no remarks can illustrate it and is more happily expressive of his remembrance of his American friends than any letter can convey. That the principles of America opened the Bastille is not to be doubted, and therefore the key comes to the right place [that is, to General George Washington.] We are advised that “ Mr. West wishes Mr. Trumbull [the noted British painter] to make a painting of the presentation of the Key to you.”

Never bashful, having used the first four of the five paragraph epistle of this 1790 letter to describe the gift of the key to the Bastille to Gen. Washington, Paine proceeds in a personal tone, that is news promptly and bluntly delivered, as from one soldier or sailor to another. Paine's news:

“I have manufactured a Bridge (a Single arch) of one hundred & ten feet Span, and five feet high from the Cord of the Arch – It is now aboard a vessel coming from Yorkshire to London where it is to be erected - - it is this only which keeps me [in] Europe...” Fate and the French Revolution would of course change Paine's plans, yet here in this letter of May the first, 1790, the reader is favoured with the news of the Key to the Bastille, and a tidy progress report on the iron bridge. There were only two persons in Europe or America who had these facts, and one of them was George Washington [Eric Foner p374-5].

HIGHLIGHTS OF PAINE'S LENGTHY STAY IN FRANCE: The French Decade, 1792 – 1802

Paine's departure from Europe had nothing to do with his scientific and technical pursuits, but on account of his politics, and the harshness of the era. To explain why Paine's exodus was both hasty and necessary to safeguard his life, a brief sidelight to the French Revolution is needed.

Parts of Paine's career are similar to another great pamphleteer, the Englishman, John Milton. It is known by historians of the French Revolution that it was much more violent and bloodier than either The Glorious Revolution in England, leaving Oliver Cromwell's forces in power; next, then to the new world, the America War of Independence, leaving George Washington's and Lafayette's forces in power. The regicide of the British sovereign, King Charles I, traumatized the English people so thoroughly that in the English Restoration, a new king and his royal line were promptly brought back to the throne. It is fortunate for Mr. John Milton, the greatest pamphleteer in English

before Paine, that Milton made his anti-royalist statements on the inherent mismanagement and often villainy of the aristocracy, and their courts, in his famous pamphlet, *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1648), which boldly supported whatever means were needed to divest a state of its hereditary monarchs, hangers-on, tainted judges and lax royal administrators. Had Milton's pamphlet appeared a few weeks **before** the axe man cleaved a royal head from its king, Mr. Milton might have found himself swinging from a handy tree branch, or being disembowelled and roasted alive, at public execution, with other Roundheads who despised the king and brought about his death? Luckily, Milton's scathing criticism of the English throne came weeks **after** the regicide, leaving Milton as a commentator, not a perpetrator, nor an instigator. Like Milton, Paine had clean hands where the path of the guillotine lay across France.

However, our engineering and bridge building friend, Mr. Paine, found himself in a Miltonic milieu because in his pleas [and petitions] to spare the life of the king whom he insisted as identifying as" Mr. Louis Capet. "And while conceding the odious waste, maladministration, misuse of office, etc., yet still in Paine's view, the regent sovereign of France did not merit the death sentence. Here, due to his siding with humanitarian, less reactionary revolutionaries, Paine had made enemies in dangerous times and places.

Robespierre in that very same year, thought eradicating France's enemies the best solution, and held that the king of France and vast numbers of his retinue should perish, and so many aristocrats and faux aristocrats alike went then at Robespierre's order, to the executioners, often tossed headlong into a public square in Paris, there to die by that most French execution device, the guillotine.

Paine had earlier found himself jailed in Paris in 1793, but was then also was released, through the actions of powerful friends, led by Ben Franklin, and the American president. Now years later, 1799, even when firebrands such as Robespierre and Marat were dead, and different revolutionaries in power, Paine's name was again put on the list of criminal undesirables. And he was again in great danger of the guillotine. Paine records in his own handwriting shows his wonderment of the events at the Luxembourg prison, Bruges, Belgium, for all of calendar 1799. It was at this prison which French authorities took 160 of 168 prisoners from their cells, and removed all but a few of these individuals to the guillotine in the space of only one night. Paine himself and seven others were spared, without explanation.

In fact, when finally Paine boarded a ship from the port of Le Harve in 1802, he was just days ahead of a French warrant would have terminated his liberty,

and perhaps his life. Also British ships were seen prowling the water around Calais, and said to have British warrants for Paine's arrest, and transport and imprisonment to England for allegations of treason.

What, indeed, had provoked the British authorities to pursue Paine across The English Channel? As early as December, 1797, in pamphlets and plans, he advocated a strategy and techniques for invading England. His proposal was sent in Memorandum form to Napoleon, with recommendations to build a French fleet of shallow-bottomed gunboats and flat bottom barges for transport of infantry and cavalry. He continued to advocate the invasion of England through 1798, using the auspices of M. Bonneville, his good friend, publishing in Paris in his friend's "Bien Informe," a press for pamphlets and newsletters. In 1798, he befriended the steamship innovator and naval architect Robert Fulton in Paris, while Paine himself was exploring the potentials for iron and steel and steam in ships – again mixing politics with technology.

By 1798, Paine had also advocated to the French government with copies memos to Napoleon that French forces should go the assistance of Irish uprisings, and advocated overthrow of English rule across the whole of Ireland. In 1799, through "Bien Informe" he advocated open seas and international commerce regulation for all nations. By 1800, his paper *Parte Maritime* had proposed international regulation and standard rules for excise, safety and administration amongst the nations. He had also filled out his proposal to Napoleon to link the regions of France through its rivers, and estuaries, with new connecting canals and iron bridges. Couple these with Paine's offense/defense/invasion planning skills, and we have Paine, the military engineer. For his regional linking proposal to Napoleon, he produced as many as four of the iron bridges he envisioned, using models five feet in length. Apparently, even this work was not appreciated, since he was voted out of his elected office in French government by his enemies, and slander undercutting his loyalties were tallied up against him.

Had this architect-engineer not have exited France in such a speedy manner, the Tom Paine story might have ended in one of the mass graves dug outside of Paris for the decapitated bodies of enemies of the state.

BRIDGES FOR AMERICA – PAINE'S 1803 PROPOSAL TO CONGRESS AND PRESIDENT JEFFERSON

Returning to the American shores in 1803, it was some time before Paine devoted himself to technical matters again, but this time distinctive American in nature.

His massive 1803 proposal plan for America's bridges, waterways, canals and their collective commercial and military consequences is his great gift to the new nation, presented in proposal form to the Congress and President Jefferson. Recalling that his study of French waterways and bridging, that concept would be a prototype for the American proposal. Paine embarked on scrutinizing innovations and improvements for US bridges and canals, based on existing data and maps. It must be remembered that cartography was often a rough hewn science, and that much of America was poorly mapped, even after Lewis & Clark made their extensive exploration of the new American territories added by The Louisiana Purchase. He did extensive model building in 1803 to support his proposals.

His techniques for the American proposal seem straightforward in his "The Construction of Iron Bridges , June 13, 1803," which is quintessential Paine for documenting his American skills and achievements. While writing a nationwide schema for a great nation such as France may seem enough to exhaust many technical folk, Paine began a massive analysis of how best to safeguard, provide patrol boats/revenue cutters, bridges, canals and supporting civil constructions for the most newly acquired waters of America to follow The Louisiana Purchase. From 1803 – 1807, he did extensive model making and design work. In 1807, he wrote a series of articles articulating how to construct and manage a fleet of gunboats to defend American shores. The model gunboats made for this engineering mock-up were sent to President in September, 1807. As with his bridge proposal, Mr. Paine used his modelling skills to carve models of armed river craft which the United States would patrol the gigantic new river basins along the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers, their streams and estuaries, from the mouth of the Mississippi at New Orleans, to the northernmost rivers coming into America from Canada. He proposed the boats to be light, fast, able to hold troops, effective and economic. His model making skills for boats were well received at the US Patent & Trade Office; and delivered on President Jefferson's desk were new boat models for the proposal. We are reminded here of Paine's equally energetic plans for shallow draft gunboats for his proposals to Napoleon for an invasion of England.

Naturally, where so many well charted rivers that needed bridging, iron bridge technology would bring many advantages, such as prefabrication, transportation by section, ease of assembly by semi-skilled workers, and ease of manufacture at large ironmongers. As with his study of France and concepts for streamlining that nation's waterways and estuaries with bridges, stream widening, river deepening, and canal building, there was in Paine's vision, a genuinely speedy and cost effective means for the new republic to safeguard its waterways. He proposed his model patrol ship to be a small,

fast and trim military vessel to collect taxes, and assure safety of the waters, monitor smuggling, and control pirates and privateers -- a real problem in the Barataria swamp and bayou regions outside New Orleans.

Paine's years in the British Excise office immediately jump to mind, that he was a skilful and knowledgeable taxation & duty officer for some years. Paine's proposals to America when fulfilled would have assured that the many cities, towns, villages and settlements would get bountiful commercial river traffic and timely communication of information.

It seems likely that Paine's credentials to design and model a prototype small warship for patrols of US waters came from his youth, when having gained a sense of quality materials and good workmanship in the family stay business, he embarked literally into the world of privateering. Aboard the British licensed privateer, named "Terrible," where the ship's commander listed himself as "Captain Death," we can imagine Paine as a young apprentice, perhaps working under the tutelage of the ship's sail maker, or the carpenter, for the maintenance of the ship. After a brief stay, Paine shipped on board "The King of Prussia," another privateer of British licensure, where he was most likely in the Able Bodied Seaman (ABS) category, fit for many jobs of seamanship. At the pleadings of his father, Paine left the nautical life on privateers after another brief stay on "King of Prussia." We must remember that his nautical days were all done by 1759. Serving aboard vessels devoted to privateering seems to have provided Paine with basic ship design ideas for his own models, that is, for fast revenue cutters and nimble patrol corvettes, as he wrote about them some four decades later in his proposals to the Americans.

The 1803 negotiations with the French for the turn-over of "Louisiana" whatever shape and size that would be, was still a mystery in 1802 -- it was a complete surprise to American negotiators when French diplomats made the decision not to withhold or exempt any parishes or locations from one massive sweeping sale. Even today, the size of the lands absorbed into America by the Louisiana Purchase are huge, sweeping from the mouth of the Mississippi up to and across the border with Canada.

Paine's engineering skills helped him assimilate proposals for the massive transportation problems that the Louisiana Purchase brought with it. It was fortunate America had one such engineer on hand. Paine wrote a very persuasive letter to Jefferson, urging him to buy the entirety of the Louisiana Territory from France, with the consent of the occupants. Initially, Jefferson was considering buying only New Orleans, and the Florida's, and in other important correspondence, Paine itemized to Jefferson the constitutional

ramifications of assimilating so great a purchase; his correspondence to the president was also fiercely opposed to the Federalist proposal to seize New Orleans by force, which today seems fool-hearty and an invitation to war where there had been only peace.

Having served in the French legislature as the representative of the great commercial, mercantile city of [le Port de] Calais in France, Paine had a keen eye for the pulse, ebb and flow of waterborne commerce. With an excellent knowledge of how French government worked, its pitfalls and unusual characteristics. Moreover, he understood that Napoleon's mandate that The French Law as specified by The Napoleonic Code would be permanent in the new US territories derived from France – which meant *not* converting the legal system over to the English Common Law -- the familiar legal model of the Colonies. This meant that Louisiana would forever observe the Napoleonic Code. There is little doubt that Paine felt imminently well qualified to offer Jefferson and the young republic such advice due to his many years in France, working intimately with the French political administration and legislature councils of that nation which Blanchard calls then "the foremost nation in the world," as he termed the new and imperial France. In his latter days, Paine was a good friend to France at the tables of American public opinion.

By the time Paine grew ill and died in 1809, the many decades of theological and political warfare had battered down Paine's good name. Many in England thought him a rogue, and then there was his hot tempered, abrasive public letter to George Washington which won him no friends, and other opinion-based epistles – these had cast a shadow over his reputation as an editor, writer, technical man and statesman. His technical skills and achievements in engineering and architecture were lost to all but a few study New Englanders whose stock and trade was in the construction and bridge industry, and some scholars of his written work at large. Paine did himself no favours with his barbed epithets on religion, so that various religious revitalization movements brand him still as a heathen, atheist, or mean spirited agnostic – instead of one of the truest Age of Reason practitioners of Deism. When Thomas Edison publicly championed Paine's reputation in the 1920s, and praised Paine's whole canon of work, it is likely that engineers and architects at least in America, England and France, heaved a sigh of relief that Paine's name was again a good one. Thomas Paine, American architect-engineer, innovator, inventor, political scientist, and man of letters had at long last gotten a laurel wreath he so long deserved.

A BOLD NEW TECHNICAL IMAGE FOR PAINE

Today a fresh image of Paine, Architect-Engineer, emerges from the technical side of the pantheon of American figures from the 18th Century. Paine deserves a more solemn and prominent place for his technical accomplishments than he now holds for his political and ethical works by themselves.

In Age of Reason neoclassic poses, we see grand and noble figures such as Washington, Voltaire and Franklin, carved by no less than the era's master sculptor, Houdon. Indeed, we need to identify America's 21st Century equal of Houdon, to be engaged for brand new statuary of Paine.

Today, with fresh emphasis on Paine the engineer, planner, model maker of bridges and ships, iron smith and draughtsman, we owe Mr. Paine fresh new statuary to celebrate his broad, wide achievements in the crafts and sciences. And perhaps one new statue alone would not do – a triumvirate might be needed.

I suggest that three statues, that is, A Paine Triumvirate, should be created show Century Paine in all his roles – writer, statesman, and architect-engineer. The first statue would be best set in the District of Columbia amidst the Federal Monuments, where Paine's plain attire and a simple desk would show a pamphleteer and writer/editor at his work.

A second sculpture then, in Philadelphia, close to Franklin's home and the Liberty Bell, would be illustrative. Here, Paine's wardrobe of a London gentleman's clothing would best show him at our Constitutional Convention, then onto to his elected office, representing Calais in the French legislature. Lastly, proposed as the engineer/architect Paine—a 3rd and final sculpture, which would be best placed in Cambridge/Boston, sited somewhere near the MIT Campus. This statue would remind the bustling crowds of the world of commerce about ordinary things – like bridges and common sense. The almost divine smile of reason, I believe, would of necessity grace Paine's face, where in artisan's clothes, sitting on the work bench of an engineer or iron worker, Paine would hold a book on his knee with his left hand, and in the right hand and forearm, he would proudly cradle a model of his iron bridge.

END NOTES

[1] Thomas Clio Rickman, *Life of Thomas Paine*, especially, Preface and Chapter 1. However, in Part 2 of Rickman, this biographer confirms Paine's bridge and model ship making skills; that his bridges were inspired by spider webs; and that his first model for the Paris trip was made from mahogany.

[2] *Complete Works of Thomas Paine, All Political and Theological Writings, preceded by A*

Life of Paine, by Calvin Blanchard: Chicago, B.F. Ford, Clark & Co., 1885, pages 13-25, 26-63.

[3] John Keane, *A Political Life: Biography of Thomas Paine*, esp. Forward and Chapter 1.

[4] David J. Brown, *Bridges: Three Thousand Years of Defying Gravity*, London: Mitchell Beazley/Octopus Publishing Group, 1999, pages 48-50.

[5] Lithograph, printed by British Institute of Engineering, 1796 – Iron Bridge over the Wear River, Sunderland County at Durham, England.

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Tim Whalen holds the BA and MA degrees in English from the University of Tulsa and is ABD in the Ph.D programme ; he has published books on technical and proposal writing at Pilot Books, ARTECH, Horizon Books, IEEE Press and Management Concepts. He has contributed articles to several journals.

THOMAS PAINE'S MATERNAL GRANDMOTHER

Clive Boyce

A letter written and signed by Thomas Paine in July 1789 was sold by auction in June 2010 the second paragraph of which reads:

"My grandmothers' maiden name was Hustler. She intermarried with Mr. Cocke and attorney and Deputy recorder of the Borough of Thetford in Norfolk, - my other, who is still living, and Mr. Devereux Hustler of Hessett near Bury St. Edmunds, in Suffolk were Brother's and Sister's Children - I always understood that the family of the Hustler's came many years before from Yorkshire.

I have researched the Hustler family as I live in a farmhouse in Drinkstone, Suffolk, owned around 1815 by Thomas Devereux Hustler, grandson of Devereux Hustler of Hessett, referred to by Thomas Paine. The wills of Samuel Hustler (1705) and his wife Dorothy (1714) establish that they were the parents of Devereux (born ca. 1701). So it follows that Samuel Hustler had a sister who was Thomas Paine's grandmother. The will of Thomas Hustler of Bury St. Edmunds (1688) confirms that he is the father of Samuel and that he also had two sons, Charles and Thomas, and two daughters, Elizabeth and Frances. The parish records of St. Mary's Church, Bury St. Edmunds provide the baptisms of the children, excluding Elizabeth whose baptism has yet to be found.

There was a further son, Henry, baptised on 10 April 1682 and buried a few days later on 21 April, 1682. One of the daughters, either Elizabeth or Frances, was therefore Thomas Paine's grandmother and, though we have no record of the marriage of a Miss Hustler to Thomas Cocke to prove which daughter it was, I strongly suspect it was Frances with Thomas Paine's mother being named after her mother. The marriage of Frances or Elizabeth Hustler to Thomas Cocke does not appear to have taken place in Bury St. Edmunds and is still to be found.

The baptismal records for Samuel, Frances, Charles and Henry refer to the mother as Elizabeth. Clearly then, she is mother of them all. She died in 1683 (buried 24 March at St. Mary's). There is a suggestion that she was Elizabeth Maxey. Thomas must have remarried as he refers to his dear and loving wife Abigail in his will. Thomas Hustler dies in 1688 and his burial record at St. Mary's on 18 December 1688, reads Thomas Hustler, gent, Town Clerk. This is interesting as Thomas Paine's grandfather, Thomas Cocke was Attorney and Deputy Recorder of Thetford. Thetford is twelve miles north of Bury St.

Edmunds and it is easy to imagine how two families involved in local government met and intermarried.

It is also significant that Thomas Hustler might have been in conflict with the powers-to-be just before his death. He was removed from the office of Town Clerk along with Deputy Recorder in 1688. The time exactly coincides with political upheavals associated with the Glorious Revolution. It is tempting to think that some of this conflict of ideas filtered down to Thomas Paine. The Corporation Minute Books of Bury St. Edmunds 1652-1835 include:

"June 26, 1688 - Gentlemen, Some time since I received a letter from you very full of duty and loyalty to our King, which you desired I would communicate to his Majesty from your Corporation. I was extremely glad of so good an opportunity of serving a body of men I always much esteemed and ever had an inclination to be kind to. Your King was pleased to read your letter himself, seemed much satisfied to find such an alteration in Bury, commanded me to thank you for it and to assure you from him that as he expects you will make good your word to him, so likewise his Majesty will most inviolably keep whatever he has promised in his Declaration.

"After having obeyed his Majesty's commands, give me leave in my own particular to return to my sincere acknowledgements for your kind expressions to me. If ever it be in my power to deserve it from you, assure yourselves I shall do it with all the readiness imaginable, and not more than you ought to expect from one that is so much,
Gentlemen, your affectionate humble servant,
"Dover".

19 July - The Deputy Recorder, John Sotheby, and the town clerk, Thomas Hustler, removed by order from the King and Council of 6 July, and Edmund Coleman and Jonathan Perry admitted by order of 7 July, without taking any oaths but those for the execution of their offices.

10 August - Edmund Coleman sworn in as Recorder with all the oaths according to the statutes, and a common-councilman admitted in the same manner, taking the oaths of allegiance and supremacy and the oath mentioned in stat. 13 Car.11. Cap.1.

23 August - Two aldermen sworn in as assistant justices, taking all the statutory oaths.

18 September - Order from the Privy Council for removing two aldermen (Thomas Burrough and Thomas Hustler, of whom the latter had been appointed on 16 March and four common-council-men (of whom two had been appointed on 14 May) and appointing certain others in their places without any oaths but that for the execution of their office.

12 October - Two addresses to the King submitted for consideration, of which one was passed by a majority, to be presented by some of the members with all possible expedition. It is ordered to be entered in the book, but the page which follows is left blank.

22 October - The King's proclamation for restoring corporations is read, and entered at length; and the charter of surrender to Charles II, not being enrolled in any of the courts,

and all persons appointed since by any patent or grant being dismissed by the proclamation, Martin Spencely, gent., is elected alderman under the old charter, and all the surviving members of the old Corporation are restored and the places vacant by death filled up.

12 January - Sir Rob. Davers, bart., and Sir Tho. Hervey, knt., elected members of the convention-parliament.

19, 24 January - John Covell elected town clerk; he takes the oath for due execution of his office, and signs the statutory declaration, but the Recorder refuses to administer the oaths of allegiance and supremacy "in regard King James had left the realm, and it was conceived those oaths would be abrogated and new oaths appointed in their stead.

1689 [-90], 6 March - Sir Rob. Davers, bart., and Henry Goldwell, esq., elected for parliament.

17 March - The town music discharged from future service in attending the Corporation, nemine contradicente.

Thomas Hustler's father, Samuel Hustler of Bury St Edmunds was also involved in the local political scene. He was appointed Undersheriff for Suffolk in 1675,

Samuel had been appointed Alderman of Bury St Edmunds in 1665 at the time of the Great Plague.

1665, The Great Plague broke out in London, and soon spread. Many villages around Bury were stricken. People leaving London who were already infected spread the disease to friends or relatives in the country.

One of the worst hit local places for plague was Needham Market. Chains were set up at either end of Needham and the inhabitants isolated themselves from the outside world. Food was delivered to the barriers in exchange for money left there by the inhabitants. Local tradition states that the dead were buried in two local fields. Normally the dead of Needham would be buried and registered at Barking, but during the plague this could not happen.

At Bury emergency measures were also taken in the town. Thomas Bull, owner of the Angel, and a common carrier, was forbidden to take his usual wagons runs to London. A watch was posted at each town gate to keep out travellers, and it seems that these measures actually worked.

Despite the effective measures put in place in Bury against infection, in this plague year three Alderman were elected in Bury one after the other, as each in turn refused to accept office, because they would be tied to the town if plague should arrive. Fines of "35 and £50 were imposed for their refusal to accept, and only a fourth elected person, Samuel Hustler, accepted the office.

In Bury, the Guildhall Feoffees built the Pest House as an isolation hospital in Sexton's

Meadows. It was not needed in 1665, as they succeeded in keeping the plague out of Bury. After this the plague seems to have died down, but by 1677 another deadly disease, smallpox, would terrify the town.

The smallpox outbreak may account for Samuel's death in 1677. He was buried at St. Mary's on 23 December, 1677 - Mr Samuel Hustler, a principal burgess. In his will he refers to "my grandchildren, sons and daughters of my son Thomas: Samuel, Thomas and Elizabeth" and gifts them £50 apiece. His granddaughter, Frances, and grandson, Charles, were born 2-3 years after his death and as such were not included.

My conclusion is that the Hustler grandmother referred to by Thomas Paine is Frances (or possibly Elizabeth) Hustler who was the daughter of Thomas Hustler and granddaughter of Samuel Hustler both of whom were very actively involved in local politics. It is easy to imagine this familial taste for political affairs having some influence on Thomas Paine.

Autograph July 22, 1799

Sw

*The intention of this letter is to
open an opportunity of knowing if any degree of
relationship exists between Mr Hustler and the writer
and to improve that opportunity as a means of reciprocal
fame if it shall be found agreeable to the parties -*

*My Grandmother's maiden name was Elizabeth
she was married with Mr. Poole in 1660 and
Deputy Recorder of the Borough of Thetford in Norfolk
my Mother who is still living and Mr. Draper
Wheaton of Thetford near King St. Edmunds in Suffolk
Brother & Sister Children - I always understood
that the Family of the Hustlers came many years
before from Yorkshire, and remember having shown
me the Mark of Yorkshire at Mr. B. Hustler's on the
Masonry of which, were the Arms of the Hustler Family
by which were the same as those on an old two
guant Silver Tankard in his possession -
about 20 years ago a Prisoner of the same of*

Paine's letter

THOMAS PAINE

F. A. Ridley

The 18th century was essentially the age which witnessed the successful popularisation of the great scientific and philosophical innovations of the supremely creative 17th century, the age of Galileo, Descartes and Spinoza. However, the popularisation, if less original than the creation of new ideas is equally useful and necessary. And the French writers who prepared the way for the French Revolution, and who hopelessly discredited the old order in church and state in the eyes of all thinking people, long before that event occurred, with Voltaire at their head, were probably the most brilliant band of popularisers in the history of the Western world. If, however, France represented the brilliant dissemination of ideas themselves, the fundamental political ideas, both of Voltaire, Rousseau and the "Encyclopaedia" originated in England, which, in this last respect, played a more original, if less spectacular, role. We may, in fact, say with regard to the 18th century that, in the contemporary diffusion of ideas, England supplied the ideas and France the lucid genius which was responsible for their universal diffusion.

For the political ideas of the "Encyclopaedia" stem from the Whig ("Glorious") Revolution of 1688, while the Deistic ideas of both Voltaire and Rousseau were taken directly from the English Deists of the early 18th century. English Deism has, thus, an important, indeed, epoch-making place in the history of European thought. But it must be admitted that its individual leaders, brave men as their fearless promulgation of unpopular tenets shows them to have been, make a poor show, as and when compared with the bright intellectual constellation which gathered around Diderot and the great "Encyclopaedia". Toland, Tindal, Collins, Annet, etc., were no doubt rather more than the "ragged regiment" as a generally sympathetic historian (Sir Leslie Stephen) rather scornfully described them; but in contemporary France, which their ideas, nevertheless, so profoundly influence, they were surpassed in literary brilliance by many writers of the second rank, and do not even begin to compare with the major constellations in the Gallic firmament. There was some truth in the later gibe of the arch-reactionary Edmund Burke, that already in his day, no one read, or took seriously, the English Deists.

There was, however, one English Deist and Republican whom a great many people still read and take very seriously indeed. And, it is safe to add, will continue to read and take seriously long after Burke's own flashy rhetoric and facile generalisations have gone to join the snows of yester-year. This was

Thomas Paine, who was both one of the masters of English prose, and that rara avis, a saint in politics; who played a front-rank role in two revolutions, the American and the French, and who all but caused a political and social revolution in Tory England, which in view of England's paramount role in the current Industrial Revolution, might have been even more useful and far-reaching in its effects than either of its French and American contemporaries; who in his *American Crisis*, wrote one of the greatest pamphlets in the English language, and who has left mankind an imperishable social legacy in the American Declaration of Independence, of which he was part-author; whose *Rights of Man* did more to popularise the ideas of political and social democracy amongst the English speaking peoples than did any other book in the English language; and, last - if indeed there is any "last" to the good wrought to mankind by "Tom" Paine - but the reverse of least, whose *Age of Reason* did more to demolish the anthropomorphic biblical god of Anglo-Saxon theology than any other book written in or since his time.

Such was Thomas Paine, the English - very English! - "Voltaire", the equal of his great French contemporary in both literary power and far reaching influence. Such was "Tom" Paine, whom every reactionary in church and state vilified in his lifetime, and whom every "respectable" historian from his own day up to, and including, ours treats invariably either with savage hostility, supercilious patronage, or that favourite device of the Tory ruling-class of Great Britain - a conspiracy of silence. For just as the Catholic Church has branded the last great pagan emperor of Rome, Julian, forever as "the Apostate", so the memory of the last great English Deist has been similarly traduced, and as "Tom" Paine has been denied even posthumous civility. But if the persistent hatred of the reactionaries of two centuries is a sign of lasting influence, then Paine must be one of the most influential men who ever lived!

Born in Thetford, Norfolk, in 1737, and dismissed from the Excise for what today be described as "strike action", Paine made no mark on in English life or letters until he emigrated to America in 1774 at the age of thirty-seven, a step he took on the advice of Benjamin Franklin. The revolt of the American colonies was just then coming to a head, and Paine took the side of the Americans against George the Third and his Tory satellites. In the War of Independence, Paine played a role which American historians are only just beginning to realise. His great pamphlets the *American Crisis* and *Common Sense*, which were read by Washington's orders to the American troops in the field, played a leading, perhaps decisive, role in stimulating the hard-pressed Americans to fight on. And Paine, hardly less than Jefferson, was responsible for the Declaration of Independence.

Refusing all pecuniary rewards, as was his invariable custom, Paine returned to the Old World, and after a brief residence in England, where he built the first iron bridge, he was drawn into the whirlpool of the French Revolution. In 1791, his *Rights of Man* gave a devastating reply to Edmund Burke's flashy *Reflections on the French Revolution*. The book soon became, and long remained the gospel of political radicalism in a Britain then verging on an imitation of the French Revolution. Its huge sale led to repeated attempts at its suppression by the ultra-reactionary Tory government of Pitt, and to the prosecution of its author for seditious libel. Paine escaped to France in the nick of time and was "tried" and (needless really to add) condemned in his absence.

In France his adventures were hardly less extraordinary. He was elected to the French "Convention", voted with the Girondins (moderates) against the death of Louis the Sixteenth, and was subsequently imprisoned by the Jacobins during the Reign of Terror (1793-4), and only escaped the guillotine by an accident. After the fall of Robespierre, he was released and completed his famous anti-Christian *Age of Reason*, which he had begun in prison. After writing a number of minor works, of which his *The Rise and Fall of the English System of Finance* is, perhaps the most important, he returned to America during the short-lived treaty of Amiens (1802-3), when the seas were no longer infested by English cruisers. He died in 1809, his death hastened by American religious bigotry, caused chiefly by *The Age of Reason* with its devastating attacks on the then infallible and sacrosanct bible. In the course of his two generations odyssey, Paine was the fighting standard-bearer and synonym of political and religious revolution in both the old world and the new. For a generation after his death his books enjoyed both a huge clandestine circulation and the fiercest persecution by the ruling class. "Tom" Paine was, beyond any doubt, the greatest iconoclastic and revolutionary figure in the entire history of Britain.

A word may now be usefully added on his fundamental ideas. Politically, he was what would now be termed a radical rather than a socialist. In one famous passage he verged on Anarchism: "government, like dress, is the badge of our lost innocence; the palaces of kings are built on the ruins of the bowers of paradise". But his influence in converting the advance guard of the English masses to republicanism cannot be over-estimated, and bore fruit later, in the Chartist movement. However, in our present connection, it is with the author of *The Age of Reason*, rather than of *Rights of Man*, with whom we are now concerned.

The Age of Reason, Paine's greatest work and, simultaneously, crowning blasphemy, must, on any showing, be regarded as an epoch-making book.

After it, it is not too much to say that the bible has never been the same to Anglo-Saxon peoples as it was before Paine's masterpiece appeared. If god, indeed, wrote the bible, Paine re-wrote it! One can, indeed, say that its English "reviser" made a new book out of the old, and that all modern students, and, indeed, all modern theologians who are not absolutely half-witted, today accept the main postulate of the author of *The Age of Reason*. That the bible is *not*, in any strict sense of the word, a "book" at all, but a whole literature, and one at that which contains every conceivable cultural level from primitive fetish-worship to great literature; and must, in brief, be criticised and "treated like any other book". In other words, that the bible is *not* the work of an unerring infallible god, but of very erring and fallible men. This message, which is at the very heart and core of *The Age of Reason*, and which seemed so unmistakably blasphemous to the "fundamentalist" England of its great author's own day has now become a trainee in modern theological circles desperately eager to be quit of the traditional orthodoxy which Paine has made forever untenable. If, writing long before the rise of modern archaeology he inevitably made some minor errors, he was yet surprisingly accurate in his "commonsense" criticisms of the biblical legends; while his fundamental contentions have become truisms. One can truly add that, though Paine called himself a Deist, yet the content of his greatest work belongs, essentially, to the history of atheism, since no man has done more, or probably so much to kill the popular god of anthropomorphic theology as did "Tom" Paine.

His adventures did not end with death. William Cobbett, George Borrow's "fierce old Cobbett", Paine's fervent admirer, removed his bones for burial in England, and lost them. So that Hesketh Pearson has happily remarked, the bones of Thomas Paine, like the living man himself, "belong to no nation".

It has been wisely observed that the best test of any recorded civilisation is the status which it confers on women. Similarly, it may be as accurately observed that there exists no better test of a scientific character of any modern history of England than the degree of justice which it accords to Thomas Paine.

NOTE

This article was published in 1947 in, it is believed, *The Freethinker*. The author was educated at Durham University for the priesthood of the Anglican Church but rather than proceed to ordination became an atheist and political historian. He was the author of several works and hundred of articles. He wrote regularly for *The Freethinker*, which for a time he edited. He was a founding member of the Thomas Paine Society and later one of its Vice-Presidents.

Thomas Paine, the Rights of Man and the Rights of the Freeborn Englishman

John Belchem

2013 marks the 50th anniversary of the publication of one of the greatest works of modern British history, E. P. Thompson's *Making of the English Working Class*. While a celebration of the emergence of collective class consciousness, this magnificent study is not without key personalities and individual inspirational figures, not least Thomas Paine of Thetford, an inveterate pamphleteer and veritable 'citizen of the world'.

Paine is the key individual catalyst instigating Thompson's narrative. It was his great gift for communication – his 'intellectual vernacular prose' – which broke through the elite and gentlemanly conventions of 18th political debate to render the message of natural rights and rational republicanism accessible to 'members unlimited', the strapline of the new Corresponding Societies of the 1790s (whose membership extended to those designated by Edmund Burke, Paine's protagonist, as the 'swinish multitude'). A great communicator rather than original thinker, it was citizen Paine who opened up the prospect of a new age of reason in which universal and natural rights (at least for men) would no longer be denied by privilege and the past, by spurious argument premised on dubious history, bogus constitutionalism, invented tradition or inherited superstition.

Thompson's interpretation underlined Paine's importance in what was labelled by historians as the 'Atlantic-Democratic Revolution'. In the 1960s, my undergraduate days, this exercise in comparative history breaking through the constraints of nation state historiography was as fashionable as Thompson's history from below. In light of events in Syria which have prompted the US to remember France as its 'oldest ally', the Atlantic Democratic Revolution might come back into fashion again.

Paine traversed the Atlantic world, personifying, as it were, the democratic revolution with its universal message, a motif which informed 'God Save Great Thomas Paine', the alternative national anthem, as it were, of British republicans. Here, for example, are the first and fourth verses:
God save great Thomas Paine,

God save great Thomas Paine,
His 'Rights of Man' explain
To every soul.
He makes the blind to see
What dupes and slaves they be,
And points out liberty,
From pole to pole.
Why should despotic pride
Usurp on every side?
Let us be free:
Grant Freedom's arms success,
And all her efforts bless,
Plant through the universe
Liberty's Tree.

Having been apprenticed to his father's trade of corset-making, he tried a number of other occupations (most notably serving as an exciseman in Lewes) before sailing for America in 1774, having recently separated from his second wife. Here he made his name with a pamphlet, *Common Sense* (1776) which, in advocating complete independence for the American colonies, argued for republicanism as the sole rational means of government – the mostly widely distributed pamphlet of the American War of Independence, it has the strongest claim, the *Dictionary of National Biography* notes, to have made independence seem both desirable and attainable to the wavering colonists. Relishing the freedom of the new world (and its potential for commercial progress) Paine readily cast aside the restrictive and gentlemanly conventions of British politics, not least the exclusive tone of Whig 'republicanism', a form of 'civic humanism', premised on glorified models of classical antiquity and selective memories of seventeenth century constitutional struggles. Far from democratic, 'republicanism' of this order accorded political primacy to independent landowners. Guardians of the constitution, it was their duty to resist imbalance and corruption in the polity through civic virtue, by active participation in political affairs. Paine, however, was altogether more democratic and inclusive. Looking beyond the trivia of piecemeal constitutional renovation, he sought an end to executive tyranny and what we would now call 'sleaze' through the 'virtue' and common good of representative democratic republican government. Hence his enthusiastic response to the French Revolution, by which time he had returned to England.

His democratic natural rights republicanism reached its most influential expression in his two-part *Rights of Man* (1791-2), prompted by the need to refute Edmund Burke's critical *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. This

was a publication sensation- on the most conservative estimate between 100,000 and 200,000 copies were sold in the first three years after publication. In the frenzied atmosphere of the early 1790s, Paine's writings rendered a fundamental division between the gentlemanly 'Friends of the People' and the plebeian 'Friends of Liberty'. His insistence on natural – as opposed to historicist or constitutional – rights broke through elite constraints, not least the identification of political rights with property rights. Indeed, his democratic republicanism mediated a genuinely radical value-system, oppositional in all its aspects. In calling for a national convention to elicit the general will and establish a republican constitution, he sought a decisive break from the conventional ways and means of reformers such as petitioning. Regarded as a highly dangerous figure, he was forced to flee to France to avoid arrest for treason in 1792. Having been accorded honorary French citizenship, he gained election to the French National Convention but ceased to attend after opposing (to some surprise) the execution of Louis XVI and the fall of the Girondins, after which he himself soon fell victim of the Terror. During imprisonment, he began work on his *Age of Reason* (two parts, 1794-5), an ill-timed deist attack on organized religion.

Thereafter his fame and fortunes declined. According to most accounts, he died in miserable circumstances in New York in 1809, having spent his last years in America often depressed, drunk and diseased – although some responses to my BBC history piece suggest otherwise. Ken Burchell contacted me from an email address, Paineite@gmail, to inform me that Paine's financial worth at time of death was in the region of \$15,000, that with a consumption of a quart of brandy per week he drank far less than either Washington or Jefferson and that he was no more depressed than any other elderly dying person. The fact is, Mr Burchell insisted, 'prudish, evangelical, pro-temperance and most of all Federalist writers attacked Paine's personal character in order to blunt his personal influence ... just as they do today'. Paine's legacy has certainly proved controversial and contested.

Within my working life as an historian, there has been considerable change. There was a marked decline in his historiographical standing as the radical 1960s receded. By the time of Thatcherite Britain, mainstream historians were dismissing Paine and his autodidact artisan audiences in the Corresponding and radical societies as an insignificant minority, accorded disproportionately tendentious attention by Thompson and other 'marxisant' practitioners of 'history from below', ideologically predisposed to ignore the beer-swilling, male chauvinist, xenophobic, beer-swilling, flag-waving majority. Furthermore, the historical establishment insisted, 'Painophobia' – the reaction proved by Paine – proved stronger than the radicalism he excited. Compelled to answer the democratic Jacobin challenge, conservative

opponents of reform developed a convincing defence of the existing order: indeed, it was the conservatives who won the unprecedented battle for the popular mind in the 1790s, although here it was conceded that rhetorical strategy and propaganda device took precedence over ideology and intellectual argument. Burke had already set the tone, recapturing the language of nationalism for the conservative cause in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Vindicated by the subsequent course of events in France, Burke's prescient pronouncements duly confirmed the supremacy of the accumulated wisdom of precedent and prescription over the wild (and un-English) fanaticism of Paineite abstract reason. Two particular aspects of Paine's un-English fanaticism were seized upon by the conservative spin doctors of the time to telling effect: levelling and infidelism.

While extolling Paine as a popular communicator, Thompson had also insisted that he provided the programme as well as the language to attract working people to politics. Paine provided the missing link between parliamentary reform and social and economic progress, drawing distressed workers away from spontaneous rioting into organized political agitation. As Thompson saw it, this was the great achievement of Part Two of *The Rights of Man*, published in February 1792, a volume which confirmed that Paine was much more than a talented populariser of advanced ideas, a megaphone for the enlightenment project against kingcraft, lordcraft and priestcraft. An original thinker far ahead of his time, he sought to redress poverty (seemingly endemic in advanced European societies) through an interventionist programme of welfare redistribution, including old age pensions, marriage allowances and maternity benefits. Stopping short of socialism, Paine transformed jurisprudential notions of social obligation – the 'soft' right to charity – into a theory of 'positive liberty' – the 'hard' right to welfare, guaranteed by government and financed by redistributive taxation (a programme expanded in his later pamphlet, *Agrarian Justice*, 1796). Judged over the long term, Thompson was correct: Paine made a decisive contribution to the politicisation of discontent. At the time, however, it was the misrepresentation of his ideas – rather than the inspiration they provided – which mattered more. The charge of 'levelling' or economic equality, promptly emerged as the crucial factor in the loyalist triumph over the radicals. Where Burke looked back to gothic feudalism and past glories, loyalist popular propagandists celebrated Britain's commercial progress, the contemporary wealth of the nation threatened by the spoliation and anarchy of republican egalitarianism. In defending inequality and hierarchy, loyalists stood forward to save Britain from the pre-commercial 'primitivism' of natural rights republicanism.

Paine's inopportune avowal of deism in his *Age of Reason* (1794-5)

enabled loyalists to add infidelism to the charges of primitivism and levelling. Here the propaganda victory of the loyalists over the godless republican levellers should not be attributed to superior argument but to what sociologists call 'resource mobilisation'. Where loyalists triumphed was in quantity not quality. Untroubled by the authorities or lack of funds, loyalists deployed every medium and resource to spread the patriotic conservative message in popular and homiletic form among the lower orders, from parish pulpit to national organisation – Reeves Association for the Preservation of Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers was the largest political organisation in the country. Many of the corresponding societies fell victim to this conservative onslaught, given physical form by Church and King mobs. The surviving societies judiciously excised the offending Paineite vocabulary of rational republicanism with its alien and revolutionary stigma. The violence directed against the radicals was recorded in the second verse of 'God Save Great Thomas Paine':

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,
Patriots vow.

While radicals struggled to retain a public presence, loyalists chose to treat the crowds to an increasing number of patriotic demonstrations to celebrate royal anniversaries and victories over the French. The success of these free holidays and licensed street festivals – at which effigies of Paine were often burnt – was not without irony, as I noted by way of conclusion in my BBC piece. In confronting Paineite democracy through such popular nationalist participation, loyalists had established what the radicals had failed fully to achieve, the extension of politics to a mass public. As subsequent events were to show, this public expressed its loyalty to the nation, not necessarily to the status quo. Patriotism indeed was soon to acquire a radical inflexion, upholding the rights of the freeborn Englishman.

After the polarization of political rhetoric in the 1790s, the opening decade of the 19th century was a time of considerable flux and confusion as war, patriotism and reform were all reassessed and redefined. Once Napoleon's imperial ambitions became apparent, the character of the war effort changed. Having previously opposed the war – an aggressive conflict against a neighbouring country which simply wanted to reform its internal system of government – radicals now came forward as ardent patriots at the head of recruiting and volunteering drives. Having redefined their role as

guardians of national virtue, radicals began to attract a wide audience as a series of scandals suggested a connection between military incompetence and parliamentary corruption. Disaffected loyalists joined the radicals in condemnation of the depredations of the fiscal-military state. Among such converts were William Cobbett, the most prolific and influential radical journalist of the early 19th century, and Henry Hunt, the Wiltshire gentleman farmer turned radical orator. Defiantly independent, these former loyalists injected a mood of impatience and intransigence, insisting on the right of all to engage in constitutional protest, to attend meetings, sign petitions and demand nothing less than universal suffrage, annual parliaments and the ballot. While refusing to compromise their new radical principles in subservience either to the Whigs or to commercial interests, they studiously avoided adherence to Paineite rational republicanism.

In typically English pragmatic and eclectic manner, natural rights arguments were subsumed or concealed within a patriotic appeal to history and precedent. Major Cartwright devoted a lifetime of study to uncover hallowed Saxon principles and practices of popular sovereignty, an original purity defiled by the 'Norman Yoke'. Open and inclusive in procedure and programme, the mass platform which emerged after 1815 amidst the transition from war to peace without plenty, deliberately exploited ambiguities in the law and constitution, drawing upon the emotive rhetoric of popular constitutionalism and 'people's history' in demanding restoration of the people's rights. Radicals proudly claimed descent from 'that patriotic band who broke the ruffian arm of arbitrary power, and dyed the field and scaffold with their pure and precious blood, for the liberties of the country'. The appeal to the rights of the freeborn Englishman was perhaps best expressed in poetic form:

Shall Englishmen o'ercome each foe
And now at home those rights forgo
Enjoy'd by none beside?
Degenerate race! Ah! then in vain
Your birthrights sacred to maintain
HAMPDEN and SYDNEY died!

The great hero of the mass platform and advocate of 'the cause of truth', Orator Hunt was hailed in the north of England as 'the intrepid champion of the people's rights'. 'The good old character of an independent country Gentleman was surely there in him', a correspondent wrote to the *Manchester Observer*.

I had almost compared him to an English Baron in the time of Magna Charta, but that Mr Hunt's motives were so much more praiseworthy: he was not there as they met that worthless King at Runnymede, to advocate the rights of a few, but of all.

Mobilised by Hunt, those without the political nation stood forward to demand radical reform in open constitutional manner and in Sunday best clothes, relying on the proud and disciplined display of numbers (marshalled by demobilised ex-servicemen) to coerce the otherwise inexorable government 'peaceably if we may, forcibly if we must'. The popular format introduced by Hunt – constitutional mass pressure from without for the constitutional democratic rights of all – continued to inform radical agitation throughout the age of the Chartists. Radicals – renovators as they were initially called - looked to the mass petitioning platform to reclaim their rights, ignoring Paine's key tactical prescription of a national convention to elicit the general will and establish a republican constitution.

My work on Hunt and the mass platform thus led me to question Thompson's claims about Paine and his breakthrough language of universal rational republicanism. As my research demonstrated, natural rights republicanism and conventions of the type prescribed by Paine did not feature in early 19th century radicalism. Instead, the crowds rallied to a populist platform of mass petitioning justified by history, the constitution and the rule of law, a potent blend of patriotic and national notions. While querying Thompson on the language of radicalism, I am not seeking to belittle Paine. Like Thompson, I recognise him as a seminal influence in English radicalism, the inspirational figure in the politicization of discontent. As Thompson noted, it was Paine who supplied the missing link, underlining the importance of politics to those enduring economic hardship. Thanks to Paine, spontaneous, backward-looking rioting was steadily replaced by forward-looking political agitation, a great advance which William Cobbett opined, the nation should acknowledge.

The implacable opponent of 'Old Corruption', Cobbett gained much of his political education about *The Decline and Fall of the English System of Finance* from Paine's critical insights into the operation of the 'system' (or 'the Thing' as Cobbett himself called it) which produced lucrative profits for political speculators and financial speculators at the expense of an intolerable and demand-stifling tax burden on the poor. To honour his mentor, Cobbett reclaimed Paine's bones from their American grave and brought them back to England (they have since disappeared).

Educated by Paine, later by Cobbett, 19th century radicals persisted in explaining inequality and exploitation in political terms even as the industrial revolution continued apace. Just as the war-inflated 'funding system' had been built on the base of political monopoly so it was political power that underpinned the capitalist system and denied the worker the right to the

whole produce of his labour. The ranks of radical demonology grew throughout the age of the Chartists: alongside fundholders, sinecurists, pensioners and other tax-gorgers, there now sat cotton lords, millocrats (note the significant political terminology) and other capitalists, parasitic middlemen whose privileged and tyrannical position of unequal exchange stemmed from their monopoly of political and legal power. Whether directed against tax-eaters and/or capitalists, the radical demand was always the same: an end to the system which left labour alone unprotected and at the mercy of those who monopolized the state and the law.

Paine's influence was thus fundamental, albeit not in the way that we might suppose. There were periodic attempts to impose his rational republican formula in purist form, by those disillusioned by the cyclical pattern of mobilisation and collapse of the mass platform, with its vacillating crowds, blustering orators and populist idioms. One such was Richard Carlile, an incorruptible Paineite ideologue who – in the aftermath of Peterloo and the collapse of the post-war mass platform – subjected himself to a regime of ideological purification and physical Puritanism with comprehensive counter-cultural rigour. A trenchant critic of the empty bluster and personalized style of Hunt's 'charismatic' leadership, Carlile subsequently displayed the worst faults of an 'ideological' leader, provoking innumerable schisms among the votaries with his dictatorial pronouncements on doctrine, so different in tone from the eclectic and undogmatic nature of popular radical argument. He insisted on strict conformity to the infidel-Republican Paineite formulary, the exegesis of which (at different times desist, atheist and spiritualist) he reserved for himself alone. In this intensely sectarian and ideological form, rational republicanism failed to engage with the general gut republicanism – the irreverence, scepticism and anti-authoritarianism – which often ran deep in working-class culture.

No longer committed to the platform, mass agitation and volatile crowds, Carlile looked to the freedom of the press to promote the 'march of infidelity', the progress of scientific materialism against superstition, myth and ignorance, but here he found himself in unwelcome alliance with commercial pornographers and the like. Unlike the pornographers, however, Carlile and his 'corps' of supporters were libertarians not libertines. In the sanctity of their 'temples of reason', these votaries of Paineite republicanism, 'zetetics' as they were called, advocated contraception, female equality and free love, a programme of sexual radicalism articulated in the language of the liberal Enlightenment, of individual freedom and moral responsibility. Infidel, republican and sexual radical, Carlile, the doctrinaire individualist, was also the proselyte of orthodox political economy. His pioneer advocacy of birth control was motivated by Malthusianism as much as by feminism, by his

conviction that distress was caused by the people themselves through bad and improvident habits and the 'excess of their numbers in relation to the supply of labour that can employ them'. 'You cannot be free, you can find no reform, until you begin it with yourselves ... abstain from gin and the gin-shop, from gospel and the gospel-shop, from sin and silly salvation'. By the end of the 1820s Carfile stood widely divorced from popular radicalism, culture and experience, a lone opponent of collective endeavour. Interpreted – or rather misinterpreted – in this way, Paine plays no part in the making of the English working class.

Eschewing ideological schisms and the like, mainstream popular radicals never denied the inspiration provided by 'immortal' Thomas Paine, but they ensured that his memory was preserved within a patriotic pantheon in which the universal rights of man were subsumed within the historic and constitutional rights of the freeborn Englishman, the charter of the land. The citizen of the world was honoured as British patriot.

Book Review

A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY OF THOMAS PAINE. W. A. SPECK. xv & 258pp. Hardbound. London, Pickering & Chatto, 2013. ISBN 13: 9781848930957. £60.00

For anyone interested in the life and influence of Thomas Paine the appearance of a new biography of him is to be warmly welcomed. Naturally it invites comparison with previous biographical studies, in particular the most recent. It bears out well in relationship to them. What stands out in this new work is its detailed coverage of Paine's career and his comprehensive treatment of the controversies and issues Paine addressed.

The author draws attention to the problems encountered by biographers due to the gaps in surviving information about Paine's early life. To some extent he fills some of these gaps, particularly when it comes to Paine's years in Lewes, in doing this he has drawn on the research undertaken by a retired excise officer of George Hindmarch, though not uncritically, though approvingly citing his contention that there was no such thing as the Headstrong Club, and that Paine had adopted republicanism - "even revolutionary" views as a consequence of his involvement. Professor Speck's examination of the years Paine spent in Lewes bring out clearly that further research might well pay dividends. A more plausible explanation for Paine's conversion to republicanism could have been a degree of resentment at the rejection of his *Case of the Officers of Excise*, over which he had laboured long and hard, and eventually lost his post with the Excise. His resentment, could well have made him more receptive to republicanism when after moving to the American colonies and there became aware of the discontent amongst the colonists to British government policies in respect of the colonies. His final conversion may well have been events at Lexington and Concord, which prompted Paine to write of rejecting 'the hardened, sullen-tempered Pharaoh of England for ever'. I would have liked to see Professor Speck go into the subject in detail. Whatever, *Common Sense* became not just a rallying point for the colonists but an exposition of republicanism that had an influence internationally. Yet for all his unqualified republicanism he was to oppose the execution of the deposed French king - at his personal cost, and would, but for an accident, or was it?, followed the king to the guillotine.

Professor Speck refers to Paine's ability to express himself in a manner readily understood by his targeted readership, artisans, small tradesmen,

apprentices and others, an ability that was to alarm the political and religious establishments in England following the publication of *Rights of Man* which had achieved record sales. Previous Paine biographers have accepted the claim that the first biography of him, written by George Chalmers, who concealed his authorship under the name "Francis Oldys", which appeared in 1791, had been commissioned and paid by the government, for whom he worked, however, Professor Speck questions the validity of this, and notes that given Chalmers political views [he had fled from the colonies following the outbreak of the revolution] he may have taken it on himself to denounce Paine. The fact that he had access to official papers, as chief clerk to the committee of the Privy Council, he would have had this.

An example, not cited by Speck, of the alarm generated first by *Rights of Man* and then by *The Age of Reason*, can be found in a missive addressed to his clergy by the bishop of London, Beilby Porteus. Writing specifically of Paine's works he refers to "the meanness of their style, and the homeliness, the plainness, and the gross familiarity of their manner, are all too well adapted to the taste and apprehension of those readers whom they are meant to captivate. This", he goes on, "is a *new* (his emphasis) species of infidel writing, recently introduced among us. Hitherto we have had to contend with the Tolands, the Tindals, the Bolingbrokes, and the Humes of the age; men, whose writings could fall only into the hands of a few in the higher ranks of life, and were not likely to make much impression on well-informed and well cultivated minds. But the pieces to which I allude [*Rights of Man* and *The Age of Reason*] are addressed to the *multitude* (again his emphasis), and are most dexterously brought down to the level of their understanding". He continues in a similar vein calling Paine's works, "most artful snares" (Beilby Porteus. *Tracts on Various Subjects*. London, Cadell & Davies, 1807. pp.276-278). Ironically, having roundly condemned Paine's style of writing he called upon his clergy to emulate it in both their writing and sermonising. Perhaps aware they could not, or would not, in 1792 he begged Hannah More to write something in simple words to open the eyes of uneducated people dazed by the words "liberty" and "equality". Initially she had refused but then agreed, writing her tract, *Village Politics*, supposedly about a discussion between a country carpenter Will Chip, who was happy with his inferior social status and defended the political and social status quo, and a supporter of Paine's ideas, who, naturally, ended up agreeing with Chip. This tract is briefly discussed by Professor Speck.

A Political Biography of Thomas Paine must surely become one of the most important of Paine biographies and deserves a wide readership. It is a detailed overview of Paine's life and career presented in varying degrees of detail, and written in what is a very readable, almost Paineite style. As well

as its nine chapters on Paine and the disputes he became involved in through his writings, many of which retain their relevance and could apply to events and situations today given some minor changes, it also has thirty-four pages of notes, an extensive bibliography and a useful index. One error I noted, the reference to Paine's Jewish critic David Levi, as being an American, whereas he was English, being by profession a hat-maker turned printer.

A Political Biography of Thomas Paine is a comprehensive and thoughtful work that deserves to be not only in academic libraries but also those of anyone seriously interested in Thomas Paine. However, its high price is regrettably likely to put it beyond the reach of many students, though, the Historical Association has just published an essay on Paine by Professor Speck. Priced at £2.99 it is at the time of writing restricted to Kindle, but hopefully the association will publish it in pamphlet form.

Robert Morrell..



