

**Birthday Party Politics:
The Thomas Paine Birthday Celebrations
and the
Origins of American Democratic Reform.**

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May 1, 2005

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The celebration of Thomas Paine's birthday, though widely overlooked today, is a tradition of central historical importance to movements for democratic reform in the US and around the world. With the exception of the Fourth of July, perhaps no other political celebration has been commemorated with more constancy and attended by a more stellar array of political and social reformers than the natal day of Thomas Paine. Inaugurated shortly after Paine's death and honored continuously ever since, Paine's birthday served as a rallying point and essential celebration for political and social reformers of the 19th and 20th centuries throughout North America and the world. This work first surveys the origins of the Thomas Paine Birthday Celebrations in England and then focuses on the history of the event in America. A review of the personalities who have organized or participated in the celebrations suggests a case for the event's close relationship to American democratic reform and its centrality in efforts to reconstruct and vindicate Paine's reputation in the wake of the defamation campaign waged by his political and religious detractors.¹

English Radicalism and the First Thomas Paine Birthday Celebration.

The first known Paine Birthday Celebrations took place undercover in London, England in the early 1800s at a time when the need for secrecy was acute. In 1812 the printer Daniel Isaac Eaton was pilloried and imprisoned for printing Paine's works, just three years after Paine's death in 1809. First suspended in the disturbances of 1794-5, *habeas corpus* was again set aside in 1818 with a new Seditious Meetings Act that banned all protest meetings. The Blasphemous and Seditious Libels Act and Newspaper Stamp Duties Act allowed printers and writers of "seditious materials" to be imprisoned on the mere allegation of libel and were designed to ensure that all "... Societies and Clubs ... should be utterly suppressed and prohibited as unlawful combinations and confederacies." In 1819, the even more draconian Six Acts were

passed by the parliament and within a year virtually every prominent reform leader rounded up, transported, or imprisoned. The first three decades of the 19th century were days of struggle for democratic activists in Britain.²

The nature and dates of the first Paine Birthday celebrations are somewhat obscure, but they began soon after Paine's death in 1809, perhaps as early as the following year. Historian Albert Post claimed in a note to his *Popular Freethought in America, 1825-1850*, that "the first Paine celebration was held secretly in London in 1818," a slightly later date for which he appears to have provided no source. The claim that Lancashire radicals held regular Paine birthday dinners as early as 1820 is made in Professor James A. Epstein's *Radical Expression: Political Language, Ritual and Symbol*. He cites a January 29, 1820 article in the *Manchester Observer*. A slightly more detailed claim was provided by Gregory Claeys in his *Thomas Paine: Social and Political Thought*. Claeys claimed that the event "may have been initiated by [Thomas] Wooler early in 1818," but was likely to have been celebrated more or less continuously since Paine's death "at least in London, where its fourteenth anniversary was proclaimed in 1823." Claeys' premise is referenced to early radical periodical sources the *Republican*, the *Lion*, and the *Black Dwarf*. Professors Epstein, Edward Royle, and William H. Wickwar point variously to William Sherwin, Richard Carlile, Thomas "Clio" Rickman, Henry Hunt, James Watson, John Cartwright, Robert Taylor and others as likely instigators or participants.³

While the precise dates and participants remain obscure, all sources are in agreement with respect to the importance and centrality of the Thomas Paine birthday celebrations for the history of 19th century British reform. In *Radical Expression*, Professor James Epstein described them as "the highlight of the political year for these advocates of Enlightenment reason." Albert Post observed that the event reached cult status and that Paine's birthday was celebrated by freethinkers

and reformers with enthusiasm equal to that of Christians on the holy days of their savior. Professor Claeys pointed to the over 500 in attendance at the 1823 the London event and noted that the celebration had spread to cities and halls throughout England. Historian Edward Royle mentioned the wide range of reform groups represented by participating radicals. The relationship of the Paine celebrations to the beginnings of the British Forum and the participation of Spenceans and Watsonites are further detailed in Iaian McCalman's *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London, 1795-1840*. Later 19th century labor leaders and freethinkers like Henry Rowley, George Foote, George Jacob Holyoake, and Charles Bradlaugh were all enthusiastic participants in their times. While a detailed historiography of the Paine birthday celebrations in Great Britain is beyond the scope of this paper, there is ample ground to assert a close relationship between commemorations of Paine's birthday and the widest possible representation of British reform and freethought.⁴

Origins of the Paine Celebration in America.

The earliest known American celebration was organized in 1825 by British émigré Benjamin Offen, a shoemaker. Perhaps no other phenomenon demonstrates the widely recognized connection between radical British émigrés and the development of early 18th century American reform movements as explicitly as the genesis of the Paine birthday celebrations. Offen was aware of the earlier London meeting, so the two events were more or less directly related. The most visible attendees in 1825 were fellow British émigrés, many of whom fled to America after the Panic of 1819 left England in disastrous economic and social condition. Some fled Enland's more restrictive laws and many imported their radicalized temperament with them. The same wave of immigrants that brought Offen included influential reformers Robert Owen, Robert Dale Owen, George Henry Evans, Gilbert Vale, Frances Wright,

Ernestine Rose, and George Houston. Others less well known became leaders and activists in the labor, equal rights, abolition, and homestead movements that arose during the first half of the 19th century.⁵

In their descriptive bibliography of the movement entitled *Freethought in the United States*, historians Gordon Stein and Marshall G. Brown asserted that the celebration in 1825 represented the rebirth of organized freethought in the United States. The claim seems reasonable, but the relationship between participants in these celebrations and movements for democratic reform was far more extensive than Brown and Stein's more limited association with "freethought" would indicate. Key participants played prominent roles in all of the great 19th century reform and equal rights movements. Working Men activists, land reformers, equal rights proponents, free soil, free labor, abolitionists, labor reformers, suffragists, and deists met to commemorate the reformer they all claimed as a progenitor of their movements.⁶

Some Americans were alarmed by the kinds of ideologies that accompanied British immigrants. While most émigrés were less visible and conservative in their religious and social views, reformers, radicals, and freethinkers received more attention in the popular press. Frances "Fanny" Wright was a noteworthy example. She was perhaps the first woman to lecture formally on political and social topics in America, in itself scandalous behavior to many. Contrary to the more demure fashion of the period, Wright kept her hair bobbed short in ringlets around her face and at times, in lieu of a dress, wore a flowing unisex pantsuit in a style with strong Greek Revival overtones. Religious and conservative elements considered her apparel scandalous and her appeals for women's rights more so. Her antislavery was just as controversial and her Tennessee communal experiment with freedmen brought her more notoriety when it ended in failure and scandal. After she attacked the clergy and challenged institutional religion in her lectures, she was quickly dubbed "Mad Fanny" and "the High Priestess of Beelzebub" by both mainstream and religious presses. Reaction to the "spirit of insubordination and sedition" of radical immigrants like Frances Wright was one of the motive forces of the the Nativism movement and broader anti-immigrant feeling that arose in the United States at that same time.⁷

Thanks to Offen and his close associate, Gilbert Vale, scholars have a bit more information with regard to the first Paine birthday celebration in America than we do for that in England. Offen remembered the event in a letter written in 1844 and published in Vale's *Beacon*, an educational and literary journal.

I arrived in New-York, April 27, 1824, and found, to my surprise, that with whomsoever you might converse, with few exceptions, the name of Thomas Paine was treated with contempt, and his services to the cause of American liberty in "the time that tried men's souls," were not known; or, if known, entirely disregarded. I then saw clearly the reason why his name was so offensive to the ears of almost every person to whom it might be mentioned.

It was sheer religious bigotry, together with the thousands of falsehoods uttered from pulpits respecting his moral character, that had poisoned the minds of the rising generation against him. The Liberals of New-York met together and determined to celebrate, for the first time, his birthday in the United States.⁸

Offen added that his decision to organize the Paine birthday celebration was inspired in part by the reaction of New Yorkers to the visit of the French patriot and Revolutionary War ally, the Marquis de Lafayette.

A fortunate circumstance occurred that gave spirit to the determination. It was the arrival of Lafayette from France in August 1824, to visit that country for whose liberties he had, when young, fought and bled. From the place of his landing, up Broadway, to the City Hall, I followed in the train of thousands of the citizens who gave the old veteran hearty welcome; and the demonstration of joy and gratitude exceeded every thing I had ever before seen, convincing me that the Americans were a grateful people, and that if the services of Mr. Paine were fully known, they would be highly valued.⁹

In this letter Offen revealed an additional concern overlooked in the few existing accounts of the event. The birthday celebration was to be more than a simple commemoration of Paine's natal day. He and his allies were motivated by a desire to counteract and refute the campaign of defamation waged against Paine's memory by Federalist enemies and their evangelical allies. This concern would still be paramount at celebrations at the end of the 19th century when participants would include

Paine's most important biographer and the two men who, after Vale and Offen, contributed most to the rehabilitation of Paine's reputation.¹⁰

Another pattern was established in 1825 that would continue throughout the history of the Paine birthday celebrations: the participants were central figures in the seminal reform movements of the era. There were forty of them in 1825. Offen himself was perhaps the most widely traveled lecturer on the freethought circuit. His 1828 lecture tour through the Mohawk Valley was sponsored and paid for by George Houston and the subscribers to Houston's *Correspondent*, one of the earliest journals of biblical criticism published in the United States. George Houston, a central participant in the 1825 birthday event, was a close friend of the radical British publisher Richard Carlile. Houston fled to the United States after he had served two years imprisonment in the notorious Newgate Prison and been fined 200 pounds sterling for publishing Baron d'Holbach's *Histoire de Jésus Christ* under the title of *Ecce Homo*. Houston was also close to the communitarian Robert Owen and co-founded the Franklin Community in Haverstraw, Rockland County, New York in 1826. Attorney Henry A. Fay acted as informal legal counsel to his associates and was a central figure when this same group of people established the Free Press Association two years later in 1827. Historians generally remember Fay, if at all, in the context of the debate over Sunday or sabbath Laws. Fay defended the drygoods seller Miles Chambers who was charged with the crime of selling clothing on Sunday. Robert L. Jennings was an Owenite activist who co-edited the *Correspondent* and later the *Free Enquirer* with Robert Dale Owen and Frances Wright. While their names are not mentioned explicitly, Thomas Paine's close friends John Fellows and William Carver, with whom Paine had resided, would have been there. Both were intimate associates of Offen, served as lecturers within the group, and were enthusiastic participants in the entire range of freethought and reform activities in New York City.¹¹

Two years later on January 29, 1827, the same group of individuals established the Free Press Association, a group initially created for the defense of George Houston's *Correspondent*. If the need for such an organization seems overstated in the context of a country that touts its freedom of the press, there may be a need to recollect that Abner Kneeland and others were tried, convicted, and jailed for blasphemy in America as late as 1834-38. Houston had just served two years in Newgate Prison prior to his emigration and as a writer he pulled no punches.¹²

According to Jesus, we can only be happy by being *poor in spirit*. Immediately after, he bids us be perfect as our heavenly father is perfect. To say the least of these notable maxims, it would seem that the Christians believe God to be a senseless being, destitute of all spirit; and that perfection, by which we are to attain heaven, consists in being equally stupid It is a maxim which paralyzes (sic) our reasoning faculties, and renders us the fit instruments of despots, to perpetuate slavery, crush science, and prevent the diffusion of knowledge.¹³

The reaction from pulpit and press was predictably shrill. Both *The Times* and the *National Gazette* recommended Houston's publication be burned. For the *National Advocate*, it was "to the flames" with anything that attacked the church. Owing to the frequently short distance between yelling "riot" and the breakout of riot itself, the concern of Houston and supporters in the Free Press Association was probably justified.¹⁴

The Paine birthday celebrations spread throughout continental North America in the wake of that first event in New York City. Hundreds have been documented subsequent to the 1825 event and throughout the 19th century. Every major city in the United States had their own event and the custom spread westward with the growth of the nation. While enthusiasm ebbed and flowed from time to time, as during the Civil War when records seem to fall off for a few years, Paine's birthday was celebrated enthusiastically by reformers and freethinkers throughout the 19th century.¹⁵

The celebrations in 1838 were characteristic of the early period and that year's attendees provide models for the kinds of relationships and influences which began in America with Benjamin Offen in 1825. At the 1838 New York City event, Gilbert Vale served as presiding officer. Vale was a multitalented educator, publisher, author, and lecturer whose *Beacon*, a "scientific and literary" journal, was the longest running periodical of its kind in the period prior to 1850. An enthusiastic Paineite and Equal Rights Democrat, Vale was at that time overseeing the erection of the Thomas Paine Monument in New Rochelle, New York and the completion of his *Life of Thomas Paine*, an important milestone in Paine scholarship and 19th century social history. He was also a political activist and served as a delegate from the 4th Ward of New York City to the 1836 Equal Rights/Loco Foco convention. Benjamin Offen, with whom Vale often shared the speaking platform, was again in attendance. Joseph Lawton served a dual vice-presidency of the event with Thomas Thompson. Lawton was a publisher and agent for George Henry Evans' *Working Man's Advocate*, the *Free Enquirer* of Frances Wright and Robert Dale Owen, and the works of Richard Carlile. Thomas Thompson was treasurer of both the Paine Monument project and the United States Moral and Philosophical Society (USMPS), a membership which he shared with George Henry Evans, who appeared at later events and almost certainly attended the 1838 birthday event as well, though his name doesn't appear in any of the newspaper reports. George Purser was a Tammany Hall Democratic activist and veteran freethinker who, with Benjamin Offen, took on a distinguished champion of Christianity, Dr. W. W. Sleight, member of the Royal College of Surgeons, in a controversial 1835 religious debate of fifteen days duration. Edward Webb, a prominent Working Men activist and later an influential member of the General Trade's Union and Mechanic's Institute, recited two ribald poems, "Calvin's Ghost" and "The Garden of Eden." A deist and close friend of socialist Robert Dale Owen,

Webb also served as chairman of the Paine Monument subscribers committee. John Frazee was in the midst of design and construction of the Customs House in New York, a paradigm of monumental American architecture in the Greek Revival style and a national monument today. Frazee, perhaps the most famous American sculptor of his period, was a political activist who stood for state office on the Working Men ticket, an ally of the cause of equal rights, and a freethinking skeptic in all things religious. Frazee also donated his talents to the design and construction of the Thomas Paine monument. George W. Matsell, who co-owned a liberal bookstore, was a Justice of the Police Court and the first Police Chief of New York City, just seven years later, in 1845.¹⁶

The opposite of somber, these were gala, exuberant, and occasionally tipsy affairs. The New York City festivities featured an elaborate banquet at the Knickerbocker Hotel catered by Alex Welsh and attended by 114 persons. Vale reported that Welsh was “famous” in the city for this sort of event. Many standing toasts were offered, occasionally ribald, like one proposed by James Armsten “... to the church-going ladies of the United States -- walking poles to exhibit British dry goods on.” Toasts were almost always accompanied by a song from the proponent, often original, bold, and *a capella*. After a banquet of many courses and many a round of toasts, the revelers retired to the ballroom where an orchestra kept them dancing late into the night.¹⁷

Celebrations elsewhere, like that hosted by Abner Kneeland and his associates in Boston, were not necessarily bibulous. The Boston group centered around Kneeland and the *Boston Investigator* paper had strong temperance values. Vale, who periodically mocked them for their abstemiousness, reported a “dinner, from which all intoxicating liquors were excluded, as usual, but in lieu of which coffee and tea were substituted.” Though less ribald than that of New York, the Boston event was nevertheless well attended and included a speech by pioneer birth control advocate Dr. Charles Knowlton and the participation of J. P. Mendum and Horace Seaver, both

abolitionists and the two men who printed a greater volume of Paine's works and related materials than any other publisher in the second half of the 19th century.¹⁸

1838 also witnessed the first Paine celebration in Cincinnati, Ohio and it must have been a fiery affair. From a report in the *Boston Investigator*:

The anniversary of the birthday of Thomas Paine had never been celebrated in the Queen of the West; and when the proposal was made, alarm and consternation seemed to have seized the enemy's camp. The Bankocrats stirred in their corruption, and their foulness dirtied the pages of their journals ... many were frightened and alarmed, for the very idea of Paine's birthday being celebrated by the firing of cannon, eating, drinking, and speaking, music and dancing, was like giving an invitation to the devil himself to come and preside over the ceremonies. Nay, no doubt something would happen; for the Mayor would stop the firing -- he had received orders to do so; and there would be a mob, that there would, it could not be otherwise, for Fanny Wright would be there.¹⁹

Frances Wright, the "High Priestess of Infidelity," arrived and spoke for equal rights. Despite the characteristically histrionic alarms, the event appears to have been successful and peaceful, notwithstanding twenty-five rounds of cannon were indeed fired in Tom Paine's honor and to cheers of approval.²⁰

The 1838 celebrations in New York, Boston, and Cincinnati were representative of the many hundreds of Paine birthday celebrations throughout the 19th century. Participants included prominent members of the American equal rights, labor, and agrarian reform movements and, consonant with the founder's original hope, attendees at the birthday events were prominent contributors to the reconstruction of Paine's reputation and the record of his accomplishments. Gilbert Vale, identified by Paine biographer Audry Williamson as Paine's "first honest and conscientious biographer," was the prime mover in the creation of the Thomas Paine Monument. George Houston was a prolific and early publisher of Paine's works, as was George Henry Evans who is generally seen as the founder of the American homestead movement. Frances Wright and Robert Dale Owen extolled Paine's contribution to reform from lecture platform and printing press. Owen wrote perhaps the first

treatise on birth control to be published in the United States, his *Moral Physiology*, which Vale continued to reprint well into the 1860s. And the Boston group included abolitionists Horace Seaver and J. P. Mendum who probably produced a larger volume of reform and freethought literature than any other publisher in the 19th century.²¹

While an extended review of 19th century celebrants is beyond the parameters of this paper, a shortened list suggests the merits of the case. In 1853, Ernestine Rose was the first woman to be elected president of the New York Paine birthday celebration. Rose was arguably the founder of the women's suffrage movement in America. She was the mentor and exemplar of Susan B. Anthony, who kept a giant portrait of Rose over her desk. Walt Whitman delivered the principle address at the 1877 Philadelphia celebration. Thomas Edison, who deeply admired Paine, was an enthusiastic participant who turned the first spade of earth for the Thomas Paine Museum, built adjacent to the Thomas Paine Monument in New Rochelle, New York. Dr. Edward Bond Foote presided over the 1892 celebration held at the Manhattan Liberal Club in Chickering Hall, New York. He and his father, Dr. Edward Bliss Foote, were perhaps the most outstanding proponents of birth control and sex education in the 19th century. The elder Dr. Foote is credited with the development of the women's cervical cap birth control device. With the considerable proceeds from their many books and enterprises they bankrolled the legal defense of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, Ezra Heywood's *Cupids Yokes*, D. M. Bennett for mailing Heywood's book, and many other victims of the notorious postal censor, Anthony Comstock. Moncure Daniel Conway, a prominent abolitionist and confidant of Abraham Lincoln, was the author of *The Life of Thomas Paine*, the most influential biography of the revolutionary pamphleteer. D. M. Bennett was the editor and publisher of *The Truth Seeker* and a key participant in the campaign to vindicate and honor Paine. Bennett, who officiated or participated at many Paine birthday events, used his journal to promote the 1881

restoration of the Thomas Paine Monument and the widest possible spectrum of reform causes. Robert Green Ingersoll was perhaps the greatest reform crusader in American history. As president of the National Liberal League, he promoted almost every progressive cause from women's rights to freedom of speech and of the press. Brown and Stein called him "the greatest active freethinker America produced ... by far the greatest freethinker of the period" and "one of the most brilliant orators of all time." In her recent popular survey of the era, *Freethinkers*, author Susan Jacoby stated that "Ingersoll did more than anyone to restore Americans' memory of their country's secular and rationalist tradition." Ingersoll's *Vindication of Thomas Paine* was printed and reprinted many thousands of times and he campaigned throughout his life for the recognition and commemoration of Thomas Paine's life and works. With Gilbert Vale and his associates at the beginning of the century, Conway, Ingersoll, and Bennett were the greatest contributors to the reconstruction of Paine's reputation and career in the latter half of the 19th century. The list of labor, literary, suffrage, abolitionist, and religious reformers who gathered to commemorate Paine, vindicate his record, and encourage one another in their respective causes appears almost endless.²²

Conclusion

Though widely overlooked today, the celebration of Thomas Paine's birthday is a tradition of central historical importance to movements for democratic reform in the US and around the world. Few political celebrations have been commemorated with more constancy and attended by a more stellar array of political and social reformers than the natal day of Thomas Paine. Attendees viewed Paine as the father of modern reform and cooperated towards their mutual goal to correct the record and remove the slanders heaped upon Paine's memory by his political and religious

enemies. That effort began in earnest with the publication of Gilbert Vale's 1839 biography of Paine and the construction of the Thomas Paine Monument, organized and completed by Vale in the same year. Towards the end of the 19th century, Robert G. Ingersoll, D. M. Bennett, Moncure Daniel Conway, and others advanced Paine's reputation and the record of his achievements. Subsequent biographical studies of Paine have been based on the foundation laid by these 19th century writers and the allies who joined them to commemorate Paine's life and works on the day of his birth.

Celebration of Paine's birthday, however, while still observed in homes and meeting places throughout the United States and Britain is at a historic low ebb. For the most part, the sparsely attended events take place out of the public eye. Will they die out with the inexorable distancing effect of time? Or will they flare up again in the midst of a present or future crisis? It seems likely the Thomas Paine birthday celebrations will stand or fall on the democratic and egalitarian ideology that Paine advocated. As long as the ideology continues to be admired, the celebration will likely persist.²³

NOTES

1. Scholars generally interpret the campaign of character assassination carried out against Paine as the result of the publication of his *Age of Reason*, a cutting attack on established religion and the innerancy of the Bible. While religionists were certainly upset, to say the least, there is ample reason to suspect that Paine's religious views were as much used as a cudgel by Federalists and their descendants, the Whig Party, to discredit his democratic-republican ideology. His views were no more heterodox than those of Thomas Jefferson, Ethan Allen, George Washington, and others from the founding era. Since the sympathies of Offen and his freethinking associates were both anti-Whig and antichurch, Paine served in either case for them.

2. For the British prohibitive acts and good historiographic survey of early 18th century British reform, see Edward Royle and James Walvin, *English Radicals and Reformers, 1760-1848* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1982), 77-78. The classic in-depth study is still E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1963). For the case of Daniel Isaac Eaton, see Ian Dyck, ed., *Citizen of the World: Essays on Thomas Paine* (London: Christopher Helm, 1987), 104.

3. See Albert Post, *Popular Freethought in America, 1825-1850* (New York: Ferrer, Strauss, and Gould, 1974), 76n; James S. Epstein, *Radical Expression: Political Language, Ritual, and Symbol in England, 1790 - 1850* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 122-123, 157-158, and 160-161; Gregory Claeys, *Thomas Paine: Political and Social Thought* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 211; Edward Royle, *Victorian Infidels* (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1974), 36-37; and William H. Wickwar, *The Struggle for Freedom of the Press*. (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1928), 55-75.

4. Epstein, 158; Post, 155; Claeys, 211; Royle, 95; and Iaian McCalman, *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London, 1795-1840* (New York/Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 197.

5. For Offen, see Post, 32, and 76-77; DeRobigne Mortimer Bennett, *The World's Sages, Infidels, and Thinkers* (New York: D. M. Bennett, 1876), 695; Marshall G. Brown and Gordon Stein. *Freethought in the United States: A Descriptive Bibliography* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1978), 31-33. For British immigration see Post, 7-33; McCalman, 214; Royle, *Victorian Infidels*, 173; and John Ashworth, 'Agrarians' and 'Aristocrats': *Party Political Ideology in the United States, 1837-1846* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1983), 179-193; Michael Durey, "Transatlantic Patriotism: Political Exiles and America in the Age of Revolution." in Clive Emsley, ed., *Artisans, Peasants, and Proletarians, 1760-1860: Essays Presented to Gwyn A. Williams* (Dover, New Hampshire: Croom Helm, 1985), 7-31; Mark Lause, "Unwashed Infidelity: Thomas Paine and Early New York City Labor History," *Labor History* 27: 3 (Summer, 1986), p. 385, 25 pp.; and Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788 - 1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 48n, and 109-110. An excellent work on New York City immigration and settlement patterns is Robert Ernst, *Immigrant Life in New York City 1825-1863* (New York: Octagon Books, 1979).

6. Brown and Stein, 34-45.
7. See footnote 4 and additional material on Nativism response to immigration in Ashworth, 184-185. For Frances Wright see William Randall Waterman, *Frances Wright*. New York: Columbia University, 1924), especially 244-245 and Edward Pessen, *Jacksonian America: Society, Personality, and Politics* (Homewood, Illinois: The Dorsey Press, 1969), 75.
8. *Beacon*, August 10, 1844.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid. Offen's tour is in Waterman, 146n and Post, 148-149. For the Franklin Community, see Wilentz, 163; Henry J. Fay is in Post, 80 and Wilentz, 163. Robert L. Jennings is Post, 39 and 181.
11. For the Free Press Association, see Post, 76-80. Kneelands trials are recounted in Post, 215-218.
12. *Correspondent*, March 24, 1827.
13. *Correspondent*, February 10, 1827.
14. Early celebrations are surveyed in Post, 1555-159. The author of this paper has also archived notices, programs, and other information relative to many more such throughout the 19th century.
15. Details of the 1838 New York celebration *Beacon*, January 13, 1838 and February 3, 1838. The Cincinnati event is in *Beacon*, February 24, 1838. The best short treatment of Gilbert Vale is in Gordon Stein, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Unbelief*, 2 vols. (Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1985), 709-710. See also Post, 48-49; Brown and Stein, 31-33; Bennett, 698-699. For Vale's Loco Foco candidacy, see Fitzwilliam Byrdsall, *The History of the Loco-Foco or Equal Rights Party... its Movements, Conventions, and Proceedings with short Characteristic Sketches of its Prominent Men* (New York: Clement and Packard, 1842), 55. Joseph Lawton is in Post, 112 and 126. For Thomas Thompson see Brown and Stein, 35 and *Beacon*, March 24, 1837. George Purser is in Post, 138. For Edward Webb's labor activism see Wilentz, 272. His deism and affiliation with Owen is in Wilentz, 196. For his recitation of two poems, see *Beacon*, February 3, 1838. See also the *Beacon*, December 23, 1837. For John Frazee and his various involvements, the best sources are Linda Hyman, "From Artisan to Artist: John Frazee and the Politics of Culture in Antebellum America" (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1978), 85, 87, and 113; and Frederick S. Voss, *John Frazee: Sculptor, 1792--1852* (Boston: The Boston Athenaeum, 1986). George Matsell is in Post, 125 and 161. For his public safety offices see Augustine Costello, *Our Police Protectors, History of the New York Police* (New York: Published by the Author, 1885, accessed 29 April, 2005); available from <http://www.usgennet.org/usa/ny/state/police/ch4pt2.html> and <http://www.usgennet.org/usa/ny/state/police/ch5pt1.html>; internet.
16. *Beacon*, February 3, 1838 and March 27, 1841.
17. *Beacon*, February 17, 1838.
18. From the *Boston Investigator* reprinted in the *Beacon*, February 24, 1838.
19. Ibid.
20. "Paine's first honest and conscientious biographer" is from Audrey Williamson, *Thomas Paine: His Life, Work, and Times*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1973), 281.

21. Ernestine Rose is from Carol Kolmerton, *The American Life of Ernestine Rose* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 102. Whitman's participation in the 1877 Philadelphia celebration is in George E. Macdonald, *Fifty Years of Freethought*, vol.1 (New York: The Truth Seeker Company, 1927), 194. Edison at the Paine Museum is from Macdonald, vol. 2, 614. For Foote and the 1892 Manhattan Club celebration, see Macdonald, vol. 2, 65. The doctors Foote, junior and senior are covered in the superlative work by Hal D. Sears, *The Sex Radicals: Free Love in High Victorian America* (Lawrence, Kansas: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1977). Additional information on the Footes and Ezra Heywood is from Marin Henry Blatt, *Free Love and Anarchism: The Biography of Ezra Heywood* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 111-113. Conway is in Macdonald, 991 and Moncure Daniel Conway, *Autobiography, Memories, and Experiences of Moncure Daniel Conway* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1904). Information on D. M. Bennett is from his biographer Roderick Bradford and a manuscript copy of his forthcoming biography, *The Truth Seeker: The Biography of D. M. Bennett*, in the collection of the author. The best biography of Ingersoll is by historian Frank Smith, *Robert G. Ingersoll: A Life* (Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1990). Quotations about Ingersoll are in Brown and Stein, 47-50 and Susan Jacoby, *Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2004), 184.

21. The Thomas Paine Birthday Celebrations website is located at <http://www.thomaspaineinstitute.org/birthday.html>.

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