

Thomas Paine: *An American Patriot*

Based on a manuscript by Mae Kramer Silver

Last week ~ Chapter 5

The Times That Try Men's Souls
Thomas Paine's writing inspires a downtrodden Continental Army.

Chapter 6 **Patriots Flee, But Fight Back**

Members of the Continental Congress liked Thomas Paine's writings, and on April 17, 1777, appointed him Secretary of Foreign Affairs, a position today called Secretary of State.

Days before the British occupied Philadelphia on September 11, 1777, Anna, Frederick and their parents, the Aitkins, had packed all they could into a wagon and set off to stay with their friends in Bordentown, New Jersey, about 40 miles to the north on the other side of the Delaware River. The government had already left Philadelphia and moved to Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

Thomas Paine wrote *The Crisis IV* to boost the morale of the residents leaving town:

"We fight not to enslave, but to set a country free, and to make room for honest men to live in."

In fact, throughout the war, Paine wrote 13 *Crisis* and three extra *Crisis* articles until the very end of the war. His first extra *Crisis* was in 1780 when a shortage of money to continue the war was, indeed, a crisis of extra proportions.

He calculated: "The peace established then will, on an average, be five shillings per head."

Money to run the war, like any war, would continue to be a problem. Later that year Paine read a letter from General George Washington to the Pennsylvania Assembly. It said the Army had no money!

Without money, the troops could not be paid and no equipment could be bought.

This was serious. The war could be lost!

Even though Paine had little money, he took some of his own, and asked other wealthy patriots to do the same.

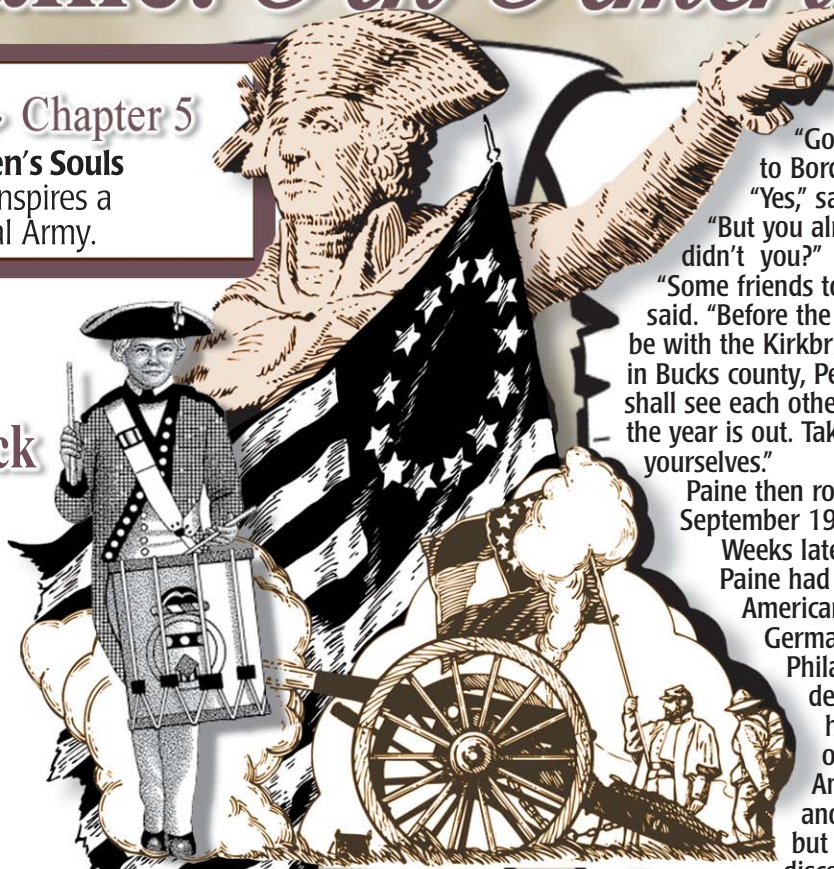
An association was formed that later became the Bank of North America, just another way that Paine would help the war effort and the new country that would be formed.

Paine's ideas, like the one for the first bank, were solutions to problems the new America faced. As he learned about these needs from those in the new government, he became their advocate and their cheerleader for solutions. He wrote in great detail about government or Army problems that needed a solution from all the colonies. Thomas Paine behaved then much like today's Presidential press secretaries do.

But before that happened, much fighting was being done. The September Frederick and Anna's family packed their wagon was still warm enough to make the trip to New Jersey somewhat easy for the new refugees.

Anna, always worried about Mr. Paine, strained her neck, hoping to see him in the crowds leaving Philadelphia.

Frederick, all six feet of him, saw him, and called. Paine came, slowed his horse alongside, raised his hat and said,



"Good day. Are you going to Bordentown?"

"Yes," said Anna.

"But you already knew that, didn't you?"

"Some friends told me," Paine said. "Before the weather turns I shall be with the Kirkbrides just north of here in Bucks county, Pennsylvania. Likely, we shall see each other again before the year is out. Take good care of yourselves."

Paine then rode away the night of September 19, 1777.

Weeks later, Anna learned that Paine had been with the American Army in Germantown (now part of Philadelphia) where a dense November fog had clouded the vision of both armies. The Americans lost another battle, retreated, but were not discouraged. The soldiers in Jersey Blues had fought well.

Paine met with General Washington the next morning. Together they watched the American blockade of the Delaware River.

Later that day Paine rode on horseback to the Kirkbrides to stay for a few weeks in their Bucks county home, Bellevue.

The village of Bordentown had suffered the occupation of thousands of British and Hessians the previous year and still looked shabby. But the hospitality of the people was bright and comforting for Anna, Frederick, and their parents.

Mr. and Mrs. Francis Hopkinson invited the Aitkins to their house for an evening of Mr. Hopkinson's harpsichord music with much singing and, of course, good food. It was a celebration that included several Philadelphia "refugees" and other friends.

When Paine arrived with the Kirkbrides from Bucks county, on the other side of the Delaware River from Bordentown, he joined them with his good sound singing voice. Joseph Kirkbride brought his violin and played it spiritedly, while Mrs. Hopkinson's beautiful voice enchanted everyone with some of her husband's songs.

Anna noticed that some of the men went into the next room and closed the door.

"I wonder what is said in that room," Anna whispered to Frederick, who was busy eating a cookie. She walked over to the elder Mrs. Borden and asked, "Do you know what is the secret in that room?"

"I think a conspiracy is afoot," said Mrs. Borden, the wife of Joseph Borden for whom the New Jersey town is named.

"A conspiracy. What is that?" asked Anna.

"The British have taken our Philadelphia away from us and our men are in a fit of outrage about that. They want to destroy the British fleet in the harbor. They are conspiring," Mrs. Borden said.

"Shhhh. It's a secret."

"Oh, how will they do that?" asked Anna.

"A maritime experiment agreed to by my son-in-law, Mr. Hopkinson. To happen sometime in January next, if all goes well," said Mrs. Borden, as she pressed her finger against her lips to signal the secret. Hopkinson was the first Secretary of the Navy.

"What is the experiment?" asked Anna.

"Something about combustible barrels floating down the Delaware," said Mrs. Borden.

On January 5, 1778, the conspirators from Bordentown released 20 floating kegs of dynamite, tied together, to hit the anchored British fleet in Philadelphia and destroy it.

But did the experiment work?

Q&A

Comprehension Question: Frederick and Anna's family packed their belongings into a wagon that September to make a trip to New Jersey. Why were they referred to as "refugees?"

NIE Activity: Even during troubled times people needed to have celebrations. In the story we find that enjoying good food and music was a way that everyone was able to relax and have some fun. The newspaper provides much information about food and entertainment. Read the newspaper and find out which sections provide readers with that information.

Essay Question: Is there a limit in times of war as to what an army can do? Describe that limit.

Designed by Terry Bellucci

Next week ~ Chapter 7

Exiled Patriots Hatch a Plot The Battle of the Kegs is "fought" by patriots living in Bordentown, N.J.

Read more about Thomas Paine: www.njreadforlife.org/paine.html