

Tom Paine's Iron Bridge

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Synopsis

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Thomas Jefferson praised Tom Paine as the greatest political writer of the age. The author of *Common Sense* and *Rights of Man*, Paine helped make revolutions in America and France. But beyond his inspiring calls to action, Paine harbored a deeper political vision for his adopted country. It was embodied in an architectural project that he spent decades planning: an iron bridge to span the Schuylkill River at Philadelphia. The bridge was Paine's answer to the political puzzle of the new nation: how to sustain a republic as large and geographically fragmented as the United States. Among its patrons were other giants of the time, including Benjamin Franklin and Edmund Burke, Paine's ideological opponent. Set against the background of the American Revolution, the story of his iron bridge reveals a new Tom Paine and connects this revolutionary to the vast program of internal improvements that soon transformed America.

Reader's comments

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