

## The risks of ink and freedom

*“Proclaim Liberty Throughout All the Land Unto All the Inhabitants Thereof”*  
—Inscription from the Liberty Bell



**Paul Zaenger**

### Outdoors

The Liberty Bell, with its inscription from the Bible's book of Leviticus, is one of many touchstones of American independence found in Philadelphia. Some might argue the city and Independence National

Historical Park hold more significant shrines showing a commitment to the growth of freedom than any other place on the globe.

Decades ago, I was employed at Valley Forge National Historical Park (in suburban Philadelphia) when one spring day a couple of us drove into the city to meet up with a friend after they ended their shift at the downtown historical park.

We had some extra time, and decided to take a tour of Independence Hall that morning. Being “in the business” of sharing significant parts of American heritage, we approached the visit with an eye for extracting more than just information from the tour.

Some background: Independence Hall and its wings hold numerous rooms. Originally built to house the colonial government of Pennsylvania, delegates came to Philadelphia because it was central to all 13 colonies. Then as now the ranger tour covers just a handful of rooms including the Assembly Room where the Declaration of Independence was adopted.

The building is small by today's standards. Because of this, one tour exiting the Assembly Room will cross the path of the next tour waiting to enter the room. So we joined our tour at the ticketed time, started at the front door, and eventually arrived at the Assembly Room.

We listened to the descriptions and identification of some of the items in the room, and after a short time brought up the end of the line as the tour filed out. Wanting more, we dropped off of the departing tour and attached ourselves to the next tour about to enter the Assembly Room. In this manner we were able to cycle back to hear several accounts of the events which occurred there. It should be pointed out that security procedures put in place after 9/11 could create serious problems for someone doing this today.

The descriptions varied, but they all included some standard information about the Declaration including: the



**The Assembly Room in Independence Hall echoes the voices of representatives whose deliberations forged the United States through the congressional debates and the Constitutional Convention.**

PHOTO COURTESY INDEPENDENCE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

weather in town was horribly hot, the flies were annoying, a delegate from Delaware rode his horse through the night to cast his vote in favor of independence, putting the issue over the top.

They also brought to light the difficulty Thomas Jefferson had watching the representatives alter and delete many of the passages he drafted. Using ink from an ink well which sat on the chairman's table at the front of the room, delegates from the various colonies launched into editing mode that July 3 and 4.

The ranger conducting our last tour, though pointed out that the operative words written by Jefferson remained intact: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.” These words and those that followed transformed the risk for independence from a list of gripes over power and taxes to a much higher level about freedom and human rights.

She again pointed to the chairman's table on which sat an ink stand. The same ink well on the stand was used by the delegates to sign the now-edited formal copy of the Declaration of Independence, Aug. 2, 1776.

Each representative understood the risks of inking their name on the document. William Ellery, a signer from

Rhode Island is credited with standing by the secretary on Aug. 2 to “watch the expressions on the faces of the delegates as they affixed their signatures to what might easily prove to be their death warrant. But while all appeared to feel the solemnity of the occasion, and their countenances bespoke their awe, it was unmingled with fear.”

Many paid a terrible price for their treason against the crown. John Hart (New Jersey) was driven into hiding in the British invasion following Washington's loss of New York City during the Revolutionary War. After the victories at Trenton and Princeton, he found his wife had died, the family scattered, and his farm and mills destroyed. George Clymer's (Pennsylvania) family hid in the woods when the British army, marching to take Philadelphia, detoured to nearly destroy their home. William Floyd's Long Island home was captured merely weeks after his signing. His family fled across Long Island Sound while soldiers plundered and destroyed much of the property. Lyman Hall (Georgia) lost his home; his property was confiscated, and his family retreated inland to escape the horrors that occurred late in the war. The stories go on.

They were willing to risk everything by devoting themselves to the future – to us, and all Americans who came after them. In the end, they rallied around Jefferson's docu-



**The Liberty Bell is housed in the Liberty Bell Center which tells the story of the bell's transformation to an international icon of freedom.**

PHOTO COURTESY INDEPENDENCE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

ment, using the ink from that inkwell to seal their pledge and be bound to the risk they were willing to undertake. We are the inheritors of that commitment. The ink, dried for nearly 240 years, should make us mindful that it is for

us today to perpetuate that commitment.

Let freedom ring.

Paul Zaenger has been a supervisory park ranger at Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park since 1993. Other park assignments include Mount Rushmore National Memorial and Glen Canyon National Recreation Area.

## New column on outdoor safety begins

There is a new feature coming to the Montrose Daily Press. Over the coming months, look for a column here sponsored in part by the Montrose County Sheriff's Posse. Here on the Outdoor Page, you will find useful tips for surviving in the outdoors.

Many areas will be covered and if you are a hiker, hunter, fisherman, camper, ATV rider, biker, photographer or snowmobiler, there will be something here that can improve your enjoyment of the outdoors and perhaps save your life.

The Montrose County Sheriff's Posse is a dedicated team of men and women who are all volunteers.

The Posse is divided into two divisions, an East End and a West End.

Each division has about 20 members who are all highly trained in all areas such as first aid/CPR/AED, wilderness First aid and survival, wildland fire fighting, tracking, GPS, helicopter landing zone, ice rescue, water rescue, traffic control and

### Mark Rackay

### Tips from the Posse

rope training to name a few. Members are additionally required to further their education of the National Incident Management System and Incident Command System Competencies through the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The members are on call 24/7, 365 days a year for any such emergencies. The sheriff may call upon them to respond anytime they are needed for just about any type of emergency. The Posse saves Montrose County an estimated \$100,000 per year by providing these services.

In 2013, the Posse contributed nearly 3,000 hours to missions that included a drowning accident that claimed a Montrose teenager, a fatal ATV crash that killed a 14-year-old and fires. Responses included 18 searches and rescues, seven security missions, 11 community service missions and 17 training exercises. These responses can become quite expensive, if the county



**In 2013, the Posse contributed nearly 3,000 hours to missions that included a drowning accident that claimed a Montrose teenager, a fatal ATV crash that killed a 14-year-old and fires.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF PAUL MARTIN

had to pay for them. The Posse relies on donations from the citizens of the county. Without your help, the Posse could not exist.

This year, the MCSP celebrates our 50th year

of serving the citizens of Montrose County. Our members have more than 350 years of combined experience with several members serving more than 40 years with the Posse.

Look to this column in the future as these dedicated men and women will share some tips to enhance your enjoyment of the outdoors and hopefully provide you with useful information that

may one day save your life.

This column will be written by Mark Rackay who is a freelance writer. Mark is a past president of the MCSP and proudly serves as a director.