ST. ANNIVERSARY ISSUE
September 2014

DEROBIGNE  M. ORTIMER  B. BENNETT (1818-1882)

was nineteenth-century America's most controversial publisher and free-speech martyr. Bennett founded the New York free-thought periodical The Truth Seeker in 1873; his publications were censored and prohibited from newsstands long before the expression "banned in Boston" was heard. Bennett's opposition to dogmatic religion and puritanical obscenity laws infuriated Anthony Comstock, the U.S. Post Office's "special agent" and self-proclaimed "weeder in God's garden." Based on original sources and extensively researched, this in-depth yet accessible biography of D.M. Bennett offers a fascinating glimpse into the secular movement during the Gilded Age. Roderick Bradford follows Bennett's evolution from a devout Shaker to an unremitting skeptic and America's most iconoclastic publisher. He chronicles the circumstances that led to Bennett's historically significant New York City obscenity trial, his imprisonment in the Albany Penitentiary, and the monumental petition campaign for a pardon that went all the way to the White House. Bradford examines Bennett's prominent role in the National Liberal League and his association with leading suffragists, spiritualists, birth-control advocates, and the founders of the Theosophical Society in India.

"Roderick Bradford reintroduces a significant nineteenth-century reformer whom mainstream historians have unfairly neglected. D.M. Bennett was the most influential liberal publisher during America's Golden Age of Freethought. Even more important, through his dogged opposition to morals campaigner Anthony Comstock—and the high price he eventually paid for it—Bennett mounted a heroic defense of freedom of expression, in the process helping to shape twentieth-century free speech standards in ways that few appreciate today. Displaying a masterful command of the historical material, Bradford deftly rescues the memory of D.M. Bennett, truly an American none of us should forget."

—TOM FLYNN, Editor, Free Inquiry magazine and The New Encyclopedia of Unbelief Executive Producer, American Freethought

D.M. Bennett: The Truth Seeker

The biography of the founder of The Truth Seeker. Hardcover, 412 pages. ISBN: 1-59102-430-7. $30.00 (Signed by author upon request.)

Send check or money order to The Truth Seeker, P.O. Box 178213, San Diego, CA. 92177.
Dear Reader,

D.M. Bennett’s “little sheet” has been around for 141 years; an amazing achievement when you consider our founder’s modest goal. “The Truth Seeker,” Bennett wrote in 1873, “is in for a year’s campaign, and we hope the intercourse with our readers may continue many years; and we ask the friends of truth, light and mental liberty to give us their aid, both by contributing to our columns and in helping us to get up a generous list of subscribers.”

The Truth Seeker—despite the unjust imprisonment of D.M. Bennett for mailing “obscenity”—is still alive; thanks to the generosity of James Hervey Johnson and the dedication of courageous editors and writers whom we will continue to revere. The Truth Seeker’s radical, yet rational voice is as relevant today as it was in 1873. The Truth Seeker periodical and website will focus on issues facing freethinkers and educate those who desire to learn more about the history of the movement which has been reported in Truth Seeker since its founding. On our website, American Freethought film clips chronicle the Christian-sponsored censorship crusades and the courageous freethinkers who—since the founding of our nation—fought for free speech and separation of state and church. After learning more about the Golden Age of Freethought—unbelievers who are undecided on whether to call themselves atheist, agnostic, rationalist, secular humanist, or skeptic—might favor freethinker.

The Truth Seeker will strive to adhere to the principles of our founder D.M. Bennett and will keep in mind Robert Ingersoll’s sage advice on publishing a freethought paper: “Above all, it should be perfectly kind and candid. In discussion there is no place for hatred, no opportunity for slander. A personality is always out of place. An angry man can neither reason himself, nor perceive the reason of what another says. Above all, and over all,” Ingersoll concluded, “a Liberal paper should teach the absolute freedom of the mind, the utter independence of the individual, the perfect liberty of speech. We should remember that the world is as it must be; that the present is the necessary offspring of the past; that the future must be what the present makes it, and that the real work of the reformer, of the philanthropist, is to change the conditions of the present, to the end that the future may be better.”

-Roderick Bradford

Publisher and Editor Roderick Bradford
Creative Director and Designer Francesca M. Smith

The Truth Seeker publication and TheTruthSeeker.net website are funded by the James Hervey Johnson Charitable Educational Trust
Copyright ©2014 Roderick Bradford

September 2014 | 3 | THETHRUTHSEEKER.net
FLYNN: “The Gilded Age is probably the most unsetled time; more social change, more innovation in that forty-year period than almost any other in American history. The freethinkers were taking the stage at a time when many of the traditional social assumptions were in flux. And in part this empowered the freethinkers’ enemies. Religious conservatives had a very good reason to think that society was going to develop in unimaginable new ways and go down paths of terrible evil as they saw it because really everything was on the table.”

In the history of American publishing, New York City played a pivotal role. In the nineteenth century, Park Row in lower Manhattan was known as newspaper row. It was home to the great papers: famous publishers and editors. James Gordon Bennett of the Herald, Tribune founder Horace Greeley, Joseph Pulitzer of The World, and Henry Raymond, founder of The New York Times. Manhattan was also home to the nation’s most successful evangelical Christian publisher, The American Tract Society. As a testament to its publishing power—the Tract Society’s skyscraper constructed in 1894—overshadowed both the Tribune and New York Times buildings.

FLYNN: “The American Tract Society was briefly one of the most powerful organizations in America. They would print hundreds of thousands of tracts and Bibles. We see during the Gilded Age that there is a marked rightward turn within in many American Christian communities. And a lot of that can be ascribed to the activism like that of the American Tract Society who used the changes in printing technology to disseminate a very culturally conservative form of Christianity as it never had been before.”

During this period, a number of freethought periodicals also flourished; many published by prominent abolitionists and suffragists. And while they never posed a serious threat to the influential metropolitan dailies or the American Tract Society, they did provide an alternative voice.

HOROWITZ: “We think of the dominant players, the New York Herald, The New York Times which became dominant. These were governed by men. But there were lots of other players. There was a whole world of an alternative press in mid-19th-century United States. In the mid-west, in the east, later in the west. And women were significant players.”

FAILKNER: “Matilda Joslyn Gage published a newspaper called the National Citizen and Befalot Box; the official publication of the National Woman’s Suffrage Association which was the organization founded by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony.”

HOROWITZ: “There were religious publishers. There were secular publishers; freethinking publishers. We start out with Fanny Wright in the early 19th century. It was an extremely vital and active world. And women were important players. Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton published The Revolution in New York City the 1870s. Victoria Woodhull and her sister Tennessee Clarifin Woodhull published Woodhull and Clarifin’s Weekly. These were very lively, interesting and in many ways very radical papers. Bennett had one of these papers, the Truth Seeker.”

In 1873, during a drought in Paris, Illinois, D.M. Bennett got into a debate with clergymen in the local newspaper over praying for rain. After the Christian editor refused to print his “infidel” letters expressing his opinion that prayer was useless, the Shaker-turned-freethinker decided to publish a periodical with the intent of giving equal voice to advocates on all sides. His wife Mary named it the Truth Seeker. At 54 years old, Bennett was a seasoned entrepreneur who had made and lost several small fortunes. In 1874, the former druggist—known as Doctor Bennett—relocated to New York City where he hired a young printer Eugene Macdonald, and began publishing in lower Manhattan, the leading cultural center of the nation. The move to New York in 1874—where the Truth Seeker would remain for nearly a century—coincided with the dawn of the culture wars in America. It was also the beginning of the great problem of human happiness will remain. Never forget that.

—THOMAS HENRY HUXLEY

THE WEEKLY PERIODICAL, THE REVOLUTION, PUBLISHED BY SUSAN B. ANTHONY AND ELIZABETH Cady STANTON

In 1873, during a drought in Paris, Illinois, D.M. Bennett got into a debate with clergymen in the local newspaper over praying for rain. After the Christian editor refused to print his “infidel” letters expressing his opinion that prayer was useless, the Shaker-turned-freethinker decided to publish a periodical with the intent of giving equal voice to advocates on all sides. His wife Mary named it the Truth Seeker. At 54 years old, Bennett was a seasoned entrepreneur who had made and lost several small fortunes. In 1874, the former druggist—known as Doctor Bennett—relocated to New York City where he hired a young printer Eugene Macdonald, and began publishing in lower Manhattan, the leading cultural center of the nation. The move to New York in 1874—where the Truth Seeker would remain for nearly a century—coincided with the dawn of the culture wars in America. It was also the beginning of the great problem of human happiness will remain. Never forget that.
Woodhull—the first woman to run for president of the United States—was arrested by Anthony Comstock for exposing an adulterous affair of America’s most famous minister, Henry Ward Beecher.

HOROWITZ: “There are a lot of parallels between the Gilded Age and today. Victoria Woodhull was a celebrity. Anthony Comstock made himself a celebrity. He understood in an instinctive way that he would be less vulnerable if he were a celebrity. So he put himself forward at every opportunity. He went after Victoria Woodhull for the same reason that she published the Beecher scandal. Because he knew it would get him attention. It was an age because of the rise of the press, the increasing use of illustration in the press. It was an age when people were being elevated to a new status and some of them knew how to work that.”

D.M. Bennett’s journalism was not only personal, it was highly provocative, often blasphemous. While the columns of the mainstream press were filled with favorable articles praising pastors, Bennett chastised clergy, chronicled their crimes, and condemned Christianity. Inspired by Thomas Paine and his book The Age of Reason, Bennett targeted revealed religion and especially Christian hypocrisy. To his supporters, Doctor Bennett was the American Voltaire; to his detractors, he was the “Devil’s own advocate.”

In the 1870s, Darwinian evolution began to gain acceptance. Even some liberal clergy embraced evolution, including Henry Ward Beecher.

FLYNN: “Ingerson was strongly pro-scientific. He was one of the early champions of Darwinism and was lecturing favorably about Darwinism very shortly after The Origin of Species was published. Of course this was an issue that constantly came up in debates with the clergy. Ingerson is what we would now call an early adopter when it came to Darwin’s theory of evolution.”

According to newspapers and magazines, the world was growing overly skeptical, and doubt was becoming a menace to the existence of the Republic because of freethinkers like Robert Ingersoll. The New York Times attacked The Great Agnostic and declared that “even if Christianity was a delusion, it was a far greater force for morality and ethics than the cruel world of pagan reality.”

Nearly every newspaper in America, if it even bothered to comment on Darwinism, took the same position. Many newspapers were conservative Christians and unrepentant to new ideas or liberal sentiments. While liberal lecturers and progressive papers promoted Charles Darwin and evolutionism, Thomas Henry Huxley—the English biologist who coined the term agnostic—was the individual most responsible for publicizing Darwinism in America.

In 1876, Huxley gave a series of lectures beginning in New York at prestigious Chickering Hall. Upon his arrival in New York harbor, Huxley noticed two of the city’s most conspicuous structures: the Tribune newspaper and Western Union Telegraph buildings. Darwin’s bulldog, as Huxley called himself, expressed his unique impression of the skyline to a reporter: “Ah, that is interesting; that is America. In the Old World the first things you see as you approach a great city are steeples; here you see, first, centers of intelligence.”

CONTOSTA: “He was one of the first scientists who did not come from a well-to-do family like Darwin. He came from a poor family and went to medical school. He was first known for his debate with Bishop Wilberforce in December of 1859 in which Wilberforce rather smart-alecky turned to Huxley and said: which one of your grandfathers do you think was descended from an ape? And Huxley shot back that he would rather have an ape as a grandfather than to be related to someone like Wilberforce who made fun of a serious scientific debate.”

With publicity generated by Thomas Henry Huxley—and the Truth Seeker—Darwin’s theory of evolution began to take hold, especially among liberals. As the 19th century neared its end, freethinkers had more than a point of view; they had a movement; a national organization; and a journal of record. The Truth Seeker had 50,000 readers and prominent supporters. In addition to covering all the religious issues facing freethinkers, the Truth Seeker served as the journal of the National Liberal League, an organization devoted to complete separation of church and state.

FLYNN: “During the Golden Age of Freethought it’s estimated that about a twelfth of the American public either were freethinkers or were sympathetic to freethought. This was a fairly loose and sometimes very fractious group of people. But they did have one national organization and this was the National Liberal League.”

GOODHEART: “The National Liberal League was really a pioneering institution bringing together in a structured form the secular movement in the United States. The Liberal League gave form to many of the anti-ecclesiastical sentiments that many radicals had in the United States. In effect, it was to bring about complete separation of church and state.”

FLYNN: “It was founded in 1876 very consciously in connection with the American centennial. And very shortly adopted the Nine Demands of Liberalism which when we read them today, they’re really quite audacious. Nine Demands of Liberalism called for eliminating military chaplaincy; for ending all prayer in the affairs of public bodies; for ending all government support of all religious organizations.”

The National Liberal League had prominent abolitionists and women’s rights advocates among its members; both Robert Ingersoll and former abolitionist Elizur Wright served as its president.

GOODHEART: “As president, Wright was particularly concerned with promoting the First Amendment right of free speech. The second thing I think he brought was a sense of dignity to the position. Because by this...
time after the Civil War was a much revered abolitionist. He was a pioneering insurance reformer who took on the big insurance corporations of the mid-19th century. His moral as ones who define them, conventional idea of morality were impeccable. He was in many ways an old-time Yankee. But one who had broken with the religious traditions and kept the idea of free inquiry of the right of individual conscience to express itself even though as Voltaire said he might disagree with the person. He might not practice what the person said but he believed in their right to speak their mind, their conscientious mind and particularly the free press."

The National Liberal League was founded during the dawn of the culture wars when puritanical obscenity laws united religious conservatives, but caused deep division in the freethought movement.

GOODHEART: "Wright as President of the National Liberal League was very important in taking a stand not only on behalf of freethought, but free sexual expression."

HOROWITZ: "Members of the National Liberal League were deeply concerned about these efforts. They did not want in many cases to talk about these efforts. They did not want in many cases to express this kind of free sexual expression. The only charge pressed by the city was that he shouldn't say "son of a bitch" in public."

GOODHEART: "Anthony Comstock, who got the Comstock Law passed, became the enfant terrible of mail censorship which really began an effort to shut down radical thought. And this would include freethinkers, feminists, those who were advocating different types of gender relations, those female physicians and male physicians who were trying to educate women as well as men about reproductive rights and biological issues, anatomy itself. These issues came to the fore."

"You break it down by talking about it." — Paul Krassner

**The Successful Hoax.** Illustration from Mormonism of What May Be Accomplished by Lying and Slicking to It.

By J. A. Macknight.

The latest publicity would have us believe that Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, was a fraud and a charlatan, who faked his Prophets. Instead, he was a man of integrity and faith, whose teachings were based on his sincere belief.

American Freethought

Freethinkers fought for free speech, women's rights, separation of church and state, and above all — Liberty!

Written, produced, and directed by Roderick Bradford.

And Council for Secular Humanism present

American Freethought

The four-part miniseries that chronicles America's freethought, atheist, and humanist heritage from the American Revolution to the 1930s.

Joseph Smith was a Magnetic, Natural-Born Liar. — Elizair Wright (1804-1855)

American Freethought and Agnostic Newspaper.
Comstock insisted. "All reading and moment upon improper subjects," must not be permitted to dwell for a tion could be his undoing. "The mind therefore even the smallest tempta- y youth down the road to ruin, and throughout life curse the man or woman. Like a panorama, the imagi- through the mind, until it wears its soul. It unnerves the arm, and steals away the elastic step. It robs the heart, until it wears its soul. It unnerves the arm, and steals away the elastic step. It robs the heart, until it wears its...
To be a woman rebel is “to look the whole world in the face with a go-to-hell look in the eyes; to have an ideal; to speak and act in defiance of convention. What rebel women claim is the right to be lazy. The right to be an unmarried mother. The right to destroy. The right to create. The right to live. The right to love.”

—MARGARET SANGER

Opening page: ANTHONY COMSTOCK
Previous page: LOWER MANHATTAN, 1886
This page, left: MARGARET SANGER  Below: ST. ANTHONY COMSTOCK,
THE VILLAGE NUISANCE, 1906
Following page: NEW YORK SOCIETY FOR THE SUPPRESSION OF VICE
(official seal)

Clockwise from top: ROBERT G. INGERSOLL SPEAKING AT NEW ROCHELLE,
To be a woman rebel is “to look the whole world in the face with a go-to-hell look
Following page:  NEW YORK SOCIETY FOR THE SUPPRESSION OF VICE
THE VILLAGE NUISANCE, 1906

What rebel women claim is the right to speak and act in defiance of convention. What rebel women claim is the right to be lazy. The right to be an unmarried mother. The right to destroy. The right to create. The right to live. The right to love.”

—MARGARET SANGER

he forced the Socialist newspaper, the New York Call, to drop an article about venereal disease that she had written as part of a series called “What Every Girl Should Know.” But the 34-year-old Sanger was only getting started. The next year she published her own magazine, The Woman Rebel, which promised to serve as the voice of working women, including prostitutes. What women needed was complete moral autonomy, Sanger wrote. To be a woman rebel is “to look the whole world in the face with a go-to-hell look in the eyes; to have an ideal; to speak and act in defiance of convention.” What rebel women claim is the right to be lazy. The right to be an unmarried mother. The right to destroy. The right to create. The right to live. The right to love.”

—MARGARET SANGER

Opening page: ANTHONY COMSTOCK
Previous page: LOWER MANHATTAN, 1886
This page, left: MARGARET SANGER  Below: ST. ANTHONY COMSTOCK,
THE VILLAGE NUISANCE, 1906
Following page: NEW YORK SOCIETY FOR THE SUPPRESSION OF VICE
(official seal)

The Comstock Act made it a crime to mail a broad range of sexual material: erotica; contraceptive medications or devices; chemicals that could be used to cause abortions; sexual implements, including dildos and other masturbatory aids; contraceptive information; and advertisements for contraception, abortion or sexual implements.

Shortly after he had helped indict Margaret Sanger’s husband, William, who had been caught distributing his wife’s pamphlet, Family Limitation. “Can’t everybody, whether rich or poor, control themselves?” Comstock died a few weeks after William Sanger was sentenced to 30 days in jail. But public opinion was beginning to shift. After 10 months of exile in Europe, Margaret returned to the United States to stand trial. As her trial approached, Sanger became a celebrity. With red hair and green eyes, the slight and attractive defendant soon found the newspapers describing what she was wearing. When the prosecutors

This is an excerpt from Chris Finan’s From the Palmer Raids to the Patriot Act: A History of the Fight for Free Speech in America (Beacon Press, 2007), which won the American Library Association’s Eli M. Oboler Award. Finan is the president of the American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression, the bookseller’s voice in the fight against censorship. http://www.chrisfinan.com

September 2014 | 13 | THETRUTHSEEKER.net
HAVE WE LOST FAITH?  
It Was Missed Fifteen Years Ago, as Ingersoll Said, and Is Not Yet Recovered.

“The question, ‘Have we lost faith?’ is not, as it seems, merely a philosophical one, but a personal one. It is not merely a question of the state of the mind; it is also a question of the action of the body. The question is, ‘Have we lost faith in the power of the human spirit to resist the power of the human heart?’”

In the case of the Comstock Act, which was passed in 1873, it was seen as a form of religious censorship. The act was intended to suppress the circulation of obscenity and immorality, and it was seen as a violation of the First Amendment. The act was applied to publications, books, and even to newspapers. It was used to suppress any material that was considered obscene or immoral, including works by such authors as Mark Twain and Walt Whitman.

The act was also used to prosecute women who sought to provide birth control information. It was seen as a violation of their rights and as a form of oppression. The act was applied to women who sought to provide information about birth control, and it was used to prosecute women who sought to provide information about abortion.

The act was also used to suppress the work of such authors as Mark Twain and Walt Whitman. Their works were seen as obscene and immoral, and they were prosecuted under the act. The act was also used to suppress the work of such authors as Mark Twain and Walt Whitman. Their works were seen as obscene and immoral, and they were prosecuted under the act.

The act was also used to suppress the work of such authors as Mark Twain and Walt Whitman. Their works were seen as obscene and immoral, and they were prosecuted under the act. The act was also used to suppress the work of such authors as Mark Twain and Walt Whitman. Their works were seen as obscene and immoral, and they were prosecuted under the act. The act was also used to suppress the work of such authors as Mark Twain and Walt Whitman. Their works were seen as obscene and immoral, and they were prosecuted under the act.
Religion Has Done Little to Prevent War, Famine, Crime, Oppression, Misery, and Unhappiness

JAMES HERVEY JOHNSON

Each religion claims that its god or gods have supreme power. If their god or gods had any such power, they could wipe out all the unhappiness in one gesture. The truth is, of course, that there are no such gods and it is only the imagination of propagandists which originate such gods and such powers.

For ages men have been and still are, human slaves. In the United States of America as late as 1865, black men had little more freedom than dogs or horses. They were owned as chattels by white masters. The masters could and did make them work all their lives without any pay whatever. Every slave could be beaten, mauled, and mutilated or killed, and many have been so treated by drunken and cruel masters. The children of the slaves were sold like cattle and sheep. All of these things were done under legal authority. All of these terrible things were done under sanction of the Christian religion. Most American slave owners were religious Christians. The slaves themselves were supposed to be Christians.

Those who favored slavery quoted the Bible as authority for maintaining this cruel and inhuman practice. The Catholic Church and the Baptist church stood side by side in protecting the perpetrators of this inhumanity and oppression. When the Civil War took place, the Methodist Church in America divided on the question of slavery. The Methodist Church South and the Methodist Episcopal Church existed separately for generations.

The Methodist Church South espoused the cause of slavery. Men who owned slaves preferred to fight and kill or be killed rather than to give up their ownership of their human chattels. Even to this day Christian men, including priests and preachers, countenance and assist the whites of the South in keeping the Negroes there from voting and expressing their political views as all Americans are supposed to have the right to do.

Every office holder who takes an oath to support the Constitution of the United States winds up by saying, “so help me God” and then actually nullifies many of the rights the Constitution tries to guarantee. There have been more wars since Christianity was established than there were before.

The Catholic Church grew wealthy beyond its dreams as the result of this conquest. The Indians were Christianized under force of arms, but the new god they prayed to was as powerless as the old ones to protect them from the cruelty of and enslavement by their Christian conquerors.

In recent years the Italians under Mussolini, from the most Christian country on earth, coming from Rome, the seat of the Pope, ruthlessly murdered their way to ownership of the lands of Ethiopia, taking the Ethiopians’ lands and country in one of the most cold blooded robbing expeditions ever known. The Ethiopian king was only restored to his throne by a more powerful nation, still worshipping the same god as the others.

Did the Pope raise one word of protest? Did any Christian church or Christian country actually do anything to stop them? Did the Christian God that the poor Ethiopians pray to do anything to save them? Did even the same Christian God the Italians pray to deliver the land to them without a fight? No, the men with the strongest arms won in that war as they have in all other wars.

Why must people still remain befuddled and think that their gods control their fates when they see Christian nations murdering other Christian inhabitants of the world; each praying to the same God of “love and good will” to permit them to get their neighbors by the throat so they can slit it?

The Hindus have their gods, Buddha, Krishna, Siva, and a thousand others. Each one is supposed to be a protecter of some class or group. Murder, misery, early death, depravity, oppression, serfdom and starvation are the daily lot of the Hindus, the most religious people on earth.

The Christian Englishmen with money to buy rulers and guns and bombs to kill protectors told the religious Hindus what to do. And so it has been from time immemorial, the strong oppressed the weak. The stronger, selfish races murdered those with less strength. The oppressors and aggressive fighters inherited the earth and control it today. Gods of clay, wood, brass, gold, and iron, gods of imagination such as the Christian, Mohammedan, and other gods have been prayed to in vain for ages by gullible fools, by priests, preachers, and rulers.
The Thomas Paine National Historical Association:
Freethought, Anarchism, and the Struggle for Free Speech

PART I

GARY BERTON
Secretary of the Thomas Paine National Historical Association
Coordinator of the Institute for Thomas Paine Studies at Iona College

The Thomas Paine National Historical Association (TPNHA) was created in the late 19th century by leading progressives in the midst of the Gilded Age. The creation was both a political and an historic achievement which had a meaningful impact. In that period of American history, the activists for labor, woman’s rights, social justice, and freethought tended to co-exist in the same organization, and even in the same person. Progressives were multi-tasking, serving on, or writing for, freethinking organizations, political action groups, suffrage movements, civil rights groups, and labor groups and parties. It was a period of great transition as the country and economy moved into a new era of capitalist extremes, and the response by progressive people and intellectuals to the transition took the form of organizing these associations.

The focal point of much of the progressive activist work was the Comstock Act of 1873 for the suppression of women’s rights. It served also to reinforce anarchist ideas and free speech advocacy in the suppression of religious dogma, including the suppression of women’s rights. It is estimated that as many as 150,000 people were arrested and jailed, including 200 women, under the Comstock Act and its enforcement—all for expressing their opposition to religious dogma, including the suppression of women’s rights. The act also served to reinforce anarchist ideas and free speech advocacy in the suppression of religious dogma, including the suppression of women’s rights.

The Thomas Paine National Historical Association was founded in the late 19th century by leading progressives in the midst of the Gilded Age. The creation was both a political and an historic achievement which had a meaningful impact. In that period of American history, the activists for labor, woman’s rights, social justice, and freethought tended to co-exist in the same organization, and even in the same person. Progressives were multi-tasking, serving on, or writing for, freethinking organizations, political action groups, suffrage movements, civil rights groups, and labor groups and parties. It was a period of great transition as the country and economy moved into a new era of capitalist extremes, and the response by progressive people and intellectuals to the transition took the form of organizing these associations.

The focal point of much of the progressive activist work was the Comstock Act of 1873 for the suppression of women’s rights. It served also to reinforce anarchist ideas and free speech advocacy in the suppression of religious dogma, including the suppression of women’s rights. It is estimated that as many as 150,000 people were arrested and jailed, including 200 women, under the Comstock Act and its enforcement—all for expressing their opposition to religious dogma, including the suppression of women’s rights. The act also served to reinforce anarchist ideas and free speech advocacy in the suppression of religious dogma, including the suppression of women’s rights.

The Thomas Paine National Historical Association was founded in the late 19th century by leading progressives in the midst of the Gilded Age. The creation was both a political and an historic achievement which had a meaningful impact. In that period of American history, the activists for labor, woman’s rights, social justice, and freethought tended to co-exist in the same organization, and even in the same person. Progressives were multi-tasking, serving on, or writing for, freethinking organizations, political action groups, suffrage movements, civil rights groups, and labor groups and parties. It was a period of great transition as the country and economy moved into a new era of capitalist extremes, and the response by progressive people and intellectuals to the transition took the form of organizing these associations.

The focal point of much of the progressive activist work was the Comstock Act of 1873 for the suppression of women’s rights. It served also to reinforce anarchist ideas and free speech advocacy in the suppression of religious dogma, including the suppression of women’s rights. It is estimated that as many as 150,000 people were arrested and jailed, including 200 women, under the Comstock Act and its enforcement—all for expressing their opposition to religious dogma, including the suppression of women’s rights. The act also served to reinforce anarchist ideas and free speech advocacy in the suppression of religious dogma, including the suppression of women’s rights.

The Thomas Paine National Historical Association was founded in the late 19th century by leading progressives in the midst of the Gilded Age. The creation was both a political and an historic achievement which had a meaningful impact. In that period of American history, the activists for labor, woman’s rights, social justice, and freethought tended to co-exist in the same organization, and even in the same person. Progressives were multi-tasking, serving on, or writing for, freethinking organizations, political action groups, suffrage movements, civil rights groups, and labor groups and parties. It was a period of great transition as the country and economy moved into a new era of capitalist extremes, and the response by progressive people and intellectuals to the transition took the form of organizing these associations.

The focal point of much of the progressive activist work was the Comstock Act of 1873 for the suppression of women’s rights. It served also to reinforce anarchist ideas and free speech advocacy in the suppression of religious dogma, including the suppression of women’s rights. It is estimated that as many as 150,000 people were arrested and jailed, including 200 women, under the Comstock Act and its enforcement—all for expressing their opposition to religious dogma, including the suppression of women’s rights. The act also served to reinforce anarchist ideas and free speech advocacy in the suppression of religious dogma, including the suppression of women’s rights.
as Emma Goldman and Lincoln Steffens. The Club was supported by and interlocked with the Truth Seeker which commissioned a book about the Manhattan Liberal Club in 1884.

From the biographies of its founders, we can understand who formed TPNHA and how it represented the different forces of the progressive organizing movement. This will be taken up in Part II of this article. But from the biographical review, several things become evident: nine of the sixteen had close ties to the Truth Seeker; there was also a close connection to the Liberal League, the National Defense Association, and the Manhattan Liberal Club, as well as the free speech movement and women’s rights. And they were all freethinkers. From the timing of the formation of TPNHA just prior to the official split in the Liberal League, it is clear that TPNHA’s formation was integral to a growing political movement centered in freethought, women’s rights, and the labor movement with ties to the People’s Party, anarchist thinking, and the Populists. This emphasis continues in the following decades after its formation.

These trends can all be seen in the leading figure of TPNHA’s formation, Thaddeus Burr Wakeman. Prof. Wakeman (1834–1913) was a noted academic, attorney, and philosopher who ran for Attorney-General of New York, and other offices, unsuccessfully on a progressive party platform. He came to TPNHA as the President of the Liberal League. He was the head of the Liberal University of Oregon, and edited the newspaper Man, which promoted the politics and philosophy of the Liberal League. Wakeman became active in Monism, a more modern form of deism, which sought to end the hold of religion on civilization and instead promote the culture of science. Wakeman, along with the Truth Seeker, and many of the names here on this list, was a leading spokesman against attempts by the state through the Comstock Acts to repress the growing progressive movements. (Wakeman served as attorney for D.M. Bennett during his 1879 obscenity trial.) T.B. Wakeman was the guiding hand of TPNHA until his death in 1913, serving on and off as President as needed, and cultivating new officers.

FACULTY OF THE LIBERAL UNIVERSITY OF OREGON. T.B. WAKEMAN (SEATED, RIGHT) 1899
books, because they could be perused. Conversation must be of the most pure. Comstock insisted. “All reading and therefore even the smallest temptations victim into practices that he loathes. He goes deeper and deeper, plunging the mind, until it wears its soul of many virtues, and imprints away the elastic step. It robs the soul. It unnerves the arm, and steals the mind, deadens the will, destroys lust. Lust defiles the body, masturbation that starts Anthony Comstock would the liquor on the ground. After he built. At the age of 18, he raided a 210 pounds, Comstock was powerful. It is masturbation that starts Anthony Comstock in his hometown, dumping responsibility and the courage to back. At the same time, it created the new ensemble obscenity law through the New Young Men’s Christian Association, he shared the conviction duty of government to curb the behavior of naturally sinful men. He also proclaim. Civil War. But it was Comstock who capitalized on the publication and sale of obscene material before the States Post Office with the power to confiscate obscene mail and arrest Comstock was only 28 when he was appointed to the post. A persuaded Congress to strengthen the erotica that he had seized in raids, he his organization and a display of the using the influential connections of went to work as an investigator for. For the next 42 years, Anthony Comstock would police the American censorship regime for the first time in America.
There Seems to Be a Pattern

While editing Lenny Bruce’s autobiography, How to Talk Dirty and Influence People, I met with him in various cities where he performed. In Milwaukee, three plainclothes police walked into his dressing room at the dinner club where he was working. They told Lenny that he was not to talk about politics or religion or sex, or they’d yank him right off the stage. The night before, a group of Catholics had signed a complaint about his act. The cops told him that he shouldn’t say “son of a bitch” in his impression of a white-collar drunk.

In October 1961, Lenny was arrested for obscenity at the Jazz Workshop in San Francisco for playing a character who used the word cocksucker to describe a cocksucker. He got basted for aptness of vocabulary. The officers said they came because of an anonymous phone call the previous night, although the doorman insisted that there had been no complaints or walkouts.

“We're trying to elevate this street,” a sergeant told Lenny. “I took offense because you broke the law. I can't see any way you can break that word down. Our society isn’t geared to it.”

Lenny replied, “You break it down by talking about it.”

In Chicago, Lenny had been released on bail and was working again at The Gate of Horn, but the head of the vice squad warned the manager: “If this man ever uses a four-letter word in this club again, I’m going to pinch you and everyone in here. If he ever speaks against religion, I’m going to pinch you and everyone in here. Do you understand? You’ve had good people here. But he mocks the pope—and I’m speaking as a Catholic—I’m here to tell you your license is in danger. We’re going to have someone here watching every show.”

And indeed, the Gate’s liquor license was suspended. There were no previous suspensions against the club, and the current charge involved neither violence nor drunken behavior. The only charge pressed by the city prosecutor was Lenny Bruce’s allegedly obscene performance, and his trial had not yet been held.

Chicago had the largest membership in the Roman Catholic Church of any archdiocese in the country. Lenny's jury consisted entirely of Catholics. The judge was Catholic. The prosecutor and his assistant were Catholic. On Ash Wednesday, the judge removed the spot of ash from his forehead and told the bailiff to instruct the others to do likewise. The sight of a judge, two prosecutors and twelve jurors, every one with a spot of ash on their foreheads, would have all the surrealistic flavor of a Lenny Bruce fantasy.

Variety reported: “The prosecutor is at least equally concerned with Bruce's indictments of organized religion as he is with the more obvious sexual content of the comic’s act. It’s possible that Bruce’s comments on the Catholic Church have hit sensitive nerves in Chicago’s Catholic-oriented administration and police department.”

On the fourth day of his trial, thirty girls from Holy Rosary, a Catholic college, dropped in on a tour of the court. Judge Ryan requested them to leave because of “the nature of the testimony.” Lenny said, “That was the thing that really did me in, in front of the jury.”

Judge Ryan instructed Lenny’s attorney to make a formal move for postponement. This the attorney did, but then the judge denied the motion, forfeited Lenny’s bond, issued a warrant for his arrest and asked the state’s attorney to start extradition proceedings. Next day, the jury found Lenny guilty. The judge gave him the maximum penalty—a year in jail and a $1,000 fine—for telling dirty jokes, in the words of one network newscaster.

A week later, the case against the Gate of Horn was dismissed, but it had become obvious that Lenny was now considered too hot to be booked in Chicago again. In San Francisco the jury found him not guilty of obscenity. Arresting officers admitted on the witness stand that his material didn’t arouse their prurient interest. But in Chicago, Judge Ryan refused to permit that line of cross-examination by the defense. Nor would he allow the head of the vice squad (“I’m speaking as a Catholic”) to take the stand, on the grounds that his testimony would be extraneous.

“Chicago is so corrupt it’s thrilling,” Lenny said.

In less than two years, Lenny was arrested fifteen times. “There seems to be a pattern,” he said, “that I’m a mad dog and they have to get me no matter what—the end justifies the means.” Lenny’s problem was that he wanted to talk on stage with the same freedom he exercised in his living room. In May 1966, he sent me his doodle of Jesus Christ nailed to the cross, with a speech balloon: “Where the hell is the ACLU?”

On August 3, while his New York obscenity conviction was still on appeal, he received a foreclosure notice on his home. Lenny died that day from an overdose of morphine. Four years after his death, the New York Court of Appeals upheld a lower court’s reversal of his conviction.

Paul Krassner is an author, journalist, comedian, and the founder, editor and frequent contributor to the free-thought magazine The Realist. First published in 1958, Krassner became a key figure in the counterculture of the 1960s as a member of Ken Kesey’s Merry Pranksters and a founding member of the Yippies. Krassner is the author of Patty Hearst and the Twinkie Murders: A Tale of Two Trials. He covered both. Available at: secure.ompress.org/index.php?l=product_detail&p=677
The past has witnessed many brutal deeds done in the name of God, but it was reserved for the nineteenth century to witness in the freest land under the sun, one which, in infancy and refinement of cruelty, rivals them all. The Protestant Church has striven hard to make her record equal in blackness the Catholic, and at last she has succeeded.

---EUGENE MACDONALD

A
fter the solemn five-hour train ride from New York, D.M. Bennett, in the custody of a deputy marshal, took a carriage for the twenty-minute trip to the Albany Penitentiary located southwest of the city. The Albany Penitentiary, opened in 1846, had a dark history of overcrowding, water torture, and even death as a form of punishment. During the Civil War, the penitentiary held Confederate prisoners who fell victim to plague and were buried in the prison yard. Known to locals as the "castle on the hill," the prison was home to about nine hundred inmates in the fall of 1879. "It looked as though it might be a college or some other institute of learning," Bennett observed as they neared the bleak fortress sitting at the end of a wide tree-lined avenue. "But the lessons taught here are not pleasant to take."

The new inmate's first lesson in Albany Penitentiary was that it was a Christian institution and conducted upon Christian principles. After being shaved and having his hair cut close by the barber, the new inmate was issued prison garb and taken to his cell, where he was served his supper. "I had no breakfast but two slices of toast and a cup of tea at the Ludlow Street Jail in Manhattan, and no dinner," he confessed, "the slice of bread and molasses which was handed to me as supper I ate with a fair relish."

The next day the 60-year-old prisoner was taught how to march and was assigned to a special overseer who made him stand for hours facing "the corner of the room like a little criminal in school." After suffering a few painful hours, the elderly prisoner asked the man if he could sit down. "Do as you are told!" he was instructed. "Weighting nearly two hundred pounds and with a lame foot from a childhood accident, he complained to the overseer who told him that he would "have to put up with it." Later that day Bennett was assigned a job in the shoemaking shop where for the first two days he had to stand for the duration of his shift. Only after his feet became inflamed and blistered was he allowed a stool. Because of his bad eyesight he was given the task of applying cement to the soles of the shoes. Considering that he was sentenced to hard labor, the work was comparatively light he thought. "Perhaps Judge Benedict and Comstock had better look into it and see that I have harder labor to perform," he wrote. "Perhaps Mrs. Hayes might be induced to lend her influence in that direction."

The prisoner was held incarcerated for the first thirty days at the penitentiary. The earliest report to his friends and anxious readers about his status was from George Albert Lomas, an old fellow Shaker from New Lebanon. I am an unbeliever, commonly called an Infidel, and that is why I am here."

---D.M. BENNETT

ano. The Shaker elder and editor of the Shaker Manifesto, a monthly publication, was able to visit Bennett in the penitentiary as it was located only a few miles south of the Watervliet Shaker village. In a rare touching letter to the Truth Seeker, Lomas described his brief interview with the prisoner and reported "the old hero was in a most undaunted mood" and likely to remain so. Lomas reported that the prisoner's uniform was "coarse but comfortable." The Shaker was especially gratified that the outfit was not the traditional half black and half red, but all one color—"Confederate gray. "But it was terrible to my feelings, when [Bennett] said, with deepest emotion: 'You know Albert, I have not been used to being treated and spoken to like a dog.'"

Bennett was appreciative of the support he received from the Shakers and felt especially indebted to George Albert Lomas. In one of his letters from prison, printed in the Truth Seeker, he thanked the Shaker community and its leaders. And although he admittedly "fell from the faith" and became a "backslider," the Shakers stood by him and he prized their friendship, constancy, and integrity. The Shaker's undying support was not limited to only prison visits and letters to the Truth Seeker. Lomas went to Albany and met with one of the city's most eminent attorneys who told him, "Bennett's trial exhibited the most audacious and successful attempt to create a climate of justice; and no greater tyranny had been exercised since the days of Jeffrey's." Concurring with the attorney's opinion, Lomas promised the readers of the Truth Seeker that he would continue his support for the editor, whom he called "an illustrious martyr, suffering from acts of the most devilish bigotry of our day."

Elijah Myrick was another prominent Shaker who came to Bennett's defense. A skilled craftsman, writer, businessman, and spiritual leader, Myrick was an outspoken liberal Shaker who was a respected elder and trustee. His forceful, compassionate letters from Ayer, Massachusetts, often appeared in both the Shaker Manifesto and the Truth Seeker. In a letter to Lomas dated August 14, 1879, Myrick expressed his concern about Bennett's well-being. He inquired if Lomas was able to see the prisoner and wondered how the warden and officers were treating him. He instructed Lomas to influence them "to treat him kindly as a noble human being which he is," and added, "Who knows but some of us will be behind the bars?" Myrick's letter, printed in the Manifesto under the heading, "The Inquisition," also criticized the clergy, the God-in-the-constitution advocates, and Hayes. He expressed disdain for the "subsidized" president "bowing reverently to the dictum of church authority." He defended Bennett's right to doubt and eloquently proclaimed, "It is not the "faithful believers" that have advanced the world. History tells us it is to the doubters—the "infidels"—that the world owes the greatest debt of gratitude."

Eugene Macdonald, the Truth Seeker's acting editor, was also fiercely defending Dr. Bennett in the columns of the weekly. He informed readers that Anthony Comstock instigated the editor's Watkins' arrest. (The source of the information was the well-known and devout Anthony's father.) Eugene argued that Bennett was jailed because of his infidelity and that his pardon was denied because of Christian influence on a cowardly president who was afraid to pardon him. "Yes, afraid is the word," Eugene averred, "and just the word."

On August 28, 1879, Eugene Macdonald accompanied a Mary Wicks Bennett and Shaker Elder Lomas and Elder Giles B. Avery met them at the depot and escorted them to the penitentiary. Avery, a long time friend and fellow Shaker, was now the leader of the Mount Lebanon Shaker community. It was hoped that the presence of the�


September 2014 | 27
EUGENE MACDONALD

band!” Anxious and too emotional to speak, she could only motion her consent. After she was permitted to meet alone with the prisoner for a few minutes, Lomas signaled the others to enter the room. Eugene observed his imprisoned mentor and described the scene for readers: “Sitting on the opposite side of the room was the noble old man, but so changed in appearance that we hardly knew him, although we have seen him every day till his imprisonment for the last six years. His beard was shaved, and the stubble of a week’s growth rendered his face rough. His jacket was of coarse dark blue, his shirt was of the cheapest and coarsest cotton, his pants were of gray shoddy.

After a firm handshake, Eugene and the others gathered around Bennett, who emotionally described prison conditions. A prison clerk who was listening to the emotional encounter, he commanded Eugene, “Don’t you again ask Hayes to pardon me, I shall be out of here one of these days, and I would rather be in my place than his.” Turning to the officious prison clerk, Bennett deftly announced that he was going to write about prison conditions and tell the truth about the Albany Penitentiary. Concerned about the food that was being served in the prison, Mary brought along a basket of apples, peaches, grapes, and canned meats. As she was tenderly handing a peach to her husband, the clerk grabbed the fruit and said, “Excuse me, madam; we will give them to him by and by.”

As the prisoner was taken away, Elder Lomas advised Eugene to prevent Mary from watching her husband through the grated window. “It was a cruel sight, and one we shall never forget,” Eugene lamented. “Going along the walk was Mr. Bennett, his arms folded and his eyes immovably fixed upon the ground before him. Posted at different points were armed keepers watching him to see that he did not look around. Had he done so he would have been punished. It was a humiliating spectacle and well calculated to make one curse the tyranny which seems inborn in Christianity.”

During the visit Eugene learned that one of the prison authorities commented after learning Bennett was in an infirmary, “I don’t care any more for him than I do for a dog!” Some of the strong language used by Bennett and MacDonald shocked the two passive Shakers. Eugene apologized and said, “We are of the world and usually say what we think.”

The next issue of the Truth Seeker contained Eugene’s report of their visit. He thanked the two Shakers and invited them to visit New York, which he called, the city of magnificence and squalor. The twenty-four-year-old acting editor’s increasing disdain of Christianity was expressed in a bitingly hostile attack on his and his mentor’s enemies: “We do not envy the church the enemy she is making. Cruel has been her sowing, bitter will be the harvest. The locks and bars of her hate will not always shut him from the world. When he once more resumes his place his hatred of the church will be unbounded. The mental torture and physical pains he is undergoing will not tend to soften his attacks upon that religion whose judges are tyrannical prosecutors, and whose ministers gloat over the sufferings of the innocent.”

“Bennett’s impassioned weekly editorials generated support for the imprisoned publisher. Touching accounts of Bennett’s cruel imprisonment written by sympathizers appeared in the Truth Seeker, the Shaker Manifesto, and various New York newspapers. Donations streamed into the publication’s office and were acknowledged weekly. James Parton, the biographer, began a defense fund that included some sizable amounts from libertarians who pledged to contribute monthly. The September 6 issue reported a hundred-dollar contribution.

On September 11, 1879, Eugene and Mrs. Bennett made their second trip to the penitentiary and were again met at the depot by Elder Lomas, whom Eugene called “the staunch and indefatigable friend of Mr. Bennett.” At their second visit, they found the prisoner in a happier mood than on the previous meeting. Mary was pleased to learn that the apples she brought would be given to her husband. Although the editor welcomed the news that twenty-five thousand names had been added to the petition, he instructed Eugene not to send them to Hayes, who could “go to the devil.”

Bennett’s second letter from Albany Penitentiary, written ten days later, revealed a troubling turn of events. He had suffered from an attack of vertigo and was placed in the prison hospital. Otherwise, he reported his health was fair and he was able to sleep nearly ten hours a night. In the hospital he was allowed to receive books and papers and to write a monthly letter on a single piece of paper. He wrote the words so closely with a sharpened pencil that they became almost solid black and held more than three thousand words. After a few months, with practice, he was up to 3,250 words that occupied more than a page of the Truth Seeker.

Your example, I hope, will make many men not afraid to touch the idol and help level it with the dust. But when the idol is overthrown, the great problem of human happiness will remain. Never forget that.

—EUGENE MACDONALD

—JAMES PARTON

he editor’s writing output while in prison was re-
markable and included his Behind the Bars: A Series of Letters Written in Prison, and a colossal two-volume compilation, The Gods and Religions of Ancient and Modern Times. James Parton generously praised the work and found it amazing that it could be accomplished under prison conditions and in only eleven months. “I should have wanted twenty-five years for it,” he wrote, “and then [it] should not have been half as interesting as you have made it.” Commenting on the book’s frontispiece photo of Bennett dressed in prison garb, Parton teased, “The dress becomes you. It brings out your bland and benevolent traits, and gives you a kind of grand-pontiff expression.” About the work he wrote: “Your example, I hope, will make many men not afraid to touch the idol and help level it with the dust. But when the idol is overthrown, the great problem of human happiness will remain. Never forget that.”

In his relentless crusade to preserve purity, Anthony Comstock forgot the Constitution that guaranteed freedom of thought. Decades later, Comstock’s biographer asserted that the vice-hunter made a serious mistake by attacking free-thinkers like Truth Seeker publisher D.M. Bennett, who, “had legions of words at their command.” Comstock, he said, “had been so unsuited as to make a few martins.”

| 28 | THE TRUTH SEEKER | September 2014 | 29 |
American Freethought Documentary Series

AVAILABLE ON DVD AND BLU-RAY

Rod Bradford’s film on the development of the American Freethought movement, and Thomas Paine’s seminal role, is a comprehensive, accurate, and illuminating work, masterfully told. It tells a story long overlooked, especially in academia, and the public is served well in bringing America’s complete history to life.

— Gary Berton

Thomas Paine National Historical Association

www.thomaspaine.org

The American Freethought film series is vital to democracy and contemporary issues. Understanding the American Freethought movement is needed now more than ever.

— Peter Phillips Ph.D. President Media Freedom Foundation /Project Censored.

www.projectcensored.org

American Freethought opened my eyes to a whole history I didn’t know. It’s like an encyclopedia for free thinkers. It should be required viewing for every American citizen.

— Randy Steele, Woodstock 104-FM Radio

This is great work, scholarly, fascinating, compelling, and yet with a calm respectful tone. I hope you find a way to push it out to a broad audience.


The four-hour American Freethought film series on secularism and censorship is produced by Roderick Bradford in association with the Council for Secular Humanism, Tom Flynn, Executive Producer. Funding provided by the James Hervey Johnson Charitable Educational Trust and the Center for Inquiry.


As the editor-publisher, our founder D.M. Bennett routinely expressed his beliefs and opinions in print.

Near the end of his life, however, critics and some readers were still questioning his mission. Prior to his death on December 6, 1882, Bennett reluctantly articulated his philosophy in the Truth Seeker:

“...to oppose the errors of supernaturalism, the tyranny of priestcraft, and the absurdities of the current system of religion. We honestly believe Christianity to be false, to be the greatest sham in the world, without truth in its history, without loveliness in its doctrines, without benefit to the human race, and without anything to sustain it in the bold it has upon the world. We are in favor of advocating the truths of nature, ...”
DEROBIGNE MORTIMER BENNETT (1818-1882) was nineteenth-century America’s most controversial publisher and free-speech martyr. Bennett founded the New York freethought periodical The Truth Seeker in 1873; his publications were censored and prohibited from newsstands long before the expression “banned in Boston” was heard. Bennett’s opposition to dogmatic religion and puritanical obscenity laws infuriated Anthony Comstock, the U.S. Post Office’s “special agent” and self-proclaimed “weeder in God’s garden.” Based on original sources and extensively researched, this in-depth yet accessible biography of D.M. Bennett offers a fascinating glimpse into the secular movement during the Gilded Age. Roderick Bradford follows Bennett’s evolution from a devout Shaker to an unremitting skeptic and America’s most iconoclastic publisher. He chronicles the circumstances that led to Bennett’s historically significant New York City obscenity trial, his imprisonment in the Albany Penitentiary, and the monumental petition campaign for a pardon that went all the way to the White House. Bradford examines Bennett’s prominent role in the National Liberal League and his association with leading suffragists, spiritualists, birth-control advocates, and the founders of the Theosophical Society in India.

“Roderick Bradford reintroduces a significant nineteenth-century reformer whom mainstream historians have unfairly neglected. D.M. Bennett was the most influential liberal publisher during America’s Golden Age of Freethought. Even more important, through his dogged opposition to morals campaigner Anthony Comstock—and the high price he eventually paid for it—Bennett mounted a heroic defense of freedom of expression, in the process helping to shape twentieth-century free speech standards in ways that few appreciate today. Displaying a masterful command of the historical material, Bradford deftly rescues the memory of D.M. Bennett, truly an American none of us should forget.”

— Tom Flynn, Editor, Free Inquiry magazine and The New Encyclopedia of Unbelief Executive Producer, American Freethought

ISBN: 1-59102-430-7. $30.00 (Signed by author upon request.)
Send check or money order to The Truth Seeker,
P.O. Box 178213, San Diego, CA. 92177.