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Elijah Parish Lovejoy the Man and the Myth

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**Elijah Parish Lovejoy
The Man and the Myth**

Scott Shirey
May 15, 1998

May 21, 1998

Dear Nancy,

My project has ended successfully! I wanted to thank you for all of your help and support. You took a sincere interest in my thesis and were always willing to help out. I know the task would have been a great deal harder without all of the information in special collections. You often went beyond the call of duty, as in the case of the Lovejoy Convocation, or the Lovejoy book I needed, and I truly appreciated it.

I am giving you a copy of my thesis, entitled Elijah Parish Lovejoy: The Man and the Myth. I hope you enjoy. Thanks again. It was great working with you.

Sincerely,

Scott Shirey

Introduction

Two dominant ideologies characterized America in the early nineteenth century, republicanism and liberalism. Republicanism, which had been the dominant ideology during the Revolution, is defined by virtue, hard work, middling prosperity, and temperance. New England Puritan morals and ethics undoubtedly reinforced these values. The idea of republicanism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century also included the idea of self-sacrifice, or a willingness of the individual to sacrifice his or her needs for the good of the community. Finally, republicanism demanded "vigilance against the corruptions of power."¹ It was this ultimate fear of power which drove many Americans to fear despotic rule, the Papacy, and eventually the institution of slavery. The Revolutionary period, however, also introduced a new ideology which conflicted with republicanism, democratic liberalism.

After the Revolution, Americans slowly progressed away from the republican ideals of the late eighteenth century and turned towards a more liberal, individualistic, and capitalistic economy. Steven Watts writes: "Thus while the American revolution apotheosized republican ideals, its transforming force also fed a "contagion of liberty" that ultimately proved subversive."² Along with instilling a love of liberty within Americans, the Revolution had released individualism, avarice, and ambition. Gordon Wood suggests that, "America had become a sprawling, materialistic, and licentious popular democracy unlike anything that had ever existed before. Prosperity replaced austerity, and the meaning of virtue was transformed."³ These new characteristics promoted entrepreneurialism, a market economy, and a growing commitment to capitalism.

¹ Robert E. Shalhope, "Republicanism and Early American Historiography," William and Mary Quarterly Vol. 39, 1982, 335.

² Steven Watts, The Republic Reborn: War and the Making of Liberal America, 1790-1820 (Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 12.

³ Gordon S. Wood, The Rising Glory of America, 1760-1820 (New York: George Braziller, 1971), 8.

However, republican values did not all together disappear. People who struggled with the social and political changes of the times often embraced republican rhetoric as a means of dealing with the rising liberalism. Watts argues that, "an arrangement of balanced republican government linked to social orders seemed more necessary than ever."⁴ Americans wanted to believe that virtue, family values, morality, and the principles of democracy would not give way to greed, deceit, and manipulation. Despite people's fears, the nation moved slowly away from republicanism and replaced it with individualism, extravagance, and disorder. Wood writes: "Everything seemed to be coming apart, and murder, suicide, and drunkenness became prevalent responses to the terrific burdens and the expectation of men were placing on men."⁵

Religious movements attempted to deal with the changing nature of America. The "Second Great Awakening," which began in 1800, arose out of the decreasing religious and moral values at the end of the eighteenth century. Its Protestant teachings revived and promoted Puritan values, temperance, fidelity, and hard work. "The 'Second Great Awakening' in America," writes George M. Marsden, "was, however, far more than a series of revivals. It was a comprehensive program designed to Christianize every aspect of American life—spiritually, morally, and intellectually."⁶ The new Protestants rejected the old Calvinistic order and believed that all individual souls could be saved. Presbyterians and Congregationalists, both of whom had roots in New England, led the revivals. These religious movements helped to define and shape the country; Americans could rationalize industrialism and capitalism by accepting Protestant teachings. Marsden writes: "Either way—whether the evangelicals shaped the culture or the culture shaped the evangelicals—the result was a close identification of Protestant and American values."⁷ Americans saw

⁴ Watts, 41.

⁵ Wood, 10.

⁶ George M. Marsden, The Evangelical Mind and the New School Presbyterian Experience (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 3.

⁷ *Ibid*, 231.

evangelicalism as supportive of the republican ideals which conflicted with the more liberal ethos.

Republicanism, liberalism, and evangelicalism, shaped American society in the early nineteenth century. However, other forces had also developed by the 1830s; the evangelical movement strengthened anti-Catholic sentiments, immigration rapidly increased, the western frontier expanded, and the debate over slavery intensified. The nature of the anti-slavery movement took on a new direction in the 1830s. Most anti-slavery societies had previously existed in the South, where they had little influence. While the southern groups began to dissolve in the thirties, northern resistance of the institution increased. Abolitionists began to make a stir. In 1834, the British ended slavery in their colonies, forcing many Americans to reconsider their own views on the subject; Americans acquired a new sense of urgency. Rising tensions between Catholics, Protestants, immigrants, abolitionists, and slaveholders often resulted in violence. The differing social and economic forces reveal an unstable and changing America.

Elijah Parish Lovejoy epitomized these times. He was born in Maine in 1802, the son of a Congregational minister and pious mother, and developed into an active, intellectual, and religious young man. In 1827, one year after graduating from Waterville College, Lovejoy headed West. He taught for a year in St. Louis, Missouri before becoming an editor of the *St. Louis Times*, a political newspaper. Lovejoy returned East where he completed his education at the Princeton Theological Seminary and received his license to preach in 1833. Lovejoy once again returned to St. Louis when Protestant businessman asked him to edit a religious newspaper called the *St. Louis Observer*; he readily accepted the challenge. As editor, Lovejoy began to attack Catholicism, preach morality, and advocate temperance.

Lovejoy, however, soon made enemies due to his denunciations of popery, drinking and other "evils." He increased his unpopularity by arguing against slavery. The Missouri Compromise introduced Missouri to the Union as a slave state in 1820. The

state, therefore, witnessed an increase in the slave population from 25, 091 to 58, 340 in the years between 1830 and 1840 and generally enjoyed tremendous growth.⁸ The people of Missouri could tolerate anti-Catholicism but could not yet bear the discussion of slavery. A sympathetic article towards Frank McIntosh, a mulatto cook taken from his jail cell and burned to death by a mob, enraged the people of St. Louis beyond repair. Lovejoy had chosen the wrong place to write on such "touchy" subjects; continual threats and an attack on his printing office in July of 1836 forced Lovejoy to move his press across the Mississippi River to Alton, Illinois.

Illinois was experiencing even more growth than Missouri; its population more than tripled every decade between 1910 and 1940.⁹ Alton's location on the Mississippi soon turned it into a major port and merchant town. Unlike Missouri, Illinois was a "free" state (although some slavery did still exist in the state). Lovejoy sought a more sympathetic audience for his ideas and paper in Alton. He continued to attack Catholicism but also increasingly broached the issue of slavery. His support of colonization (the plan of ending slavery by sending all the slaves back to Africa) turned to gradual abolition and increasingly progressed towards immediate abolition. His views were radical for the West, although conservative compared with eastern abolitionists. William Lloyd Garrison and others had advocated immediate abolition as early as 1831, when Garrison published the first edition of his anti-slavery journal, *The Liberator*. The formation of the American Anti-Slavery Society followed only two years later. However, these activities took place in the Northeast. The West was not ready for Lovejoy's publications.

Citizens of Alton continually threatened Lovejoy as his paper gained new subscribers and more influence. A mob had chased Garrison in 1835 through Boston; Lovejoy now faced the same danger. Mobs soon destroyed three of his printing presses by throwing them in the river. Refusing to submit to outside pressure, he had a fourth

⁸ Donald B. Dodd, ed., Historical Statistics of the States of the United States: Two Centuries of the Census, 1790-1990 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1993), 51.

⁹Ibid, 27.

printing press delivered to a warehouse in Alton. Lovejoy and a small group of supporters took up arms to defend the press. They engaged in a deadly battle with an angry mob on the night of November 7, 1837. Elijah Parish Lovejoy fell dead after receiving five bullets, three in his chest.

Lovejoy is remembered and celebrated today for his association with the free press and abolition. Much like the historic figures of John Brown and Paul Revere, Elijah Parish Lovejoy became more popular in death than in life. John Brown, although viewed somewhat as an irrational fanatic for his raid at Harper's Ferry and murders in Kansas, has become a martyr to abolition and a hero. The nation, with some help from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and his poetry, has turned Paul Revere into the mythic midnight rider while all but forgetting about his partner, William Dawes. Americans embraced and transformed Lovejoy's image, as they did with Brown and Revere. Senator Paul Simon, describes Lovejoy as "Freedom's Champion." Colby College, founded as Waterville College, reveres Lovejoy as their greatest graduate. The State of Illinois continues to celebrate the anniversary of his death year after year. Statues, poems, and stories keep all these figures alive, whether their contemporary images are mythic or realistic.

The story of Elijah Parish Lovejoy and the myth that followed is representative of the myth-making process in America. The nation transformed his identity to represent American values; republicanism, free speech, and liberty. The making of a myth of Lovejoy has three different stages; his life and death, the development of his myth, and his myth. It is crucial to have an accurate understanding of Lovejoy's life, unimpaired by contemporary views, before the myth can be understandable. Modern celebrations derive Lovejoy's image mostly from the last month of his life, at a time when he was just beginning to develop concrete beliefs. The simple question, "Who was Elijah Parish Lovejoy?" must be answered. This will entail clarifying his moral, political, and religious viewpoints. He supported anti-Catholicism, anti-immigration, temperance, emancipation, and free speech. He was also a Presbyterian minister, an editor, a teacher, a husband, and

a father. It is necessary to place Lovejoy in an appropriate historical framework; modern day perceptions seem to view him as an abstract figure from the past. The characteristics of Lovejoy are inseparable from the 1830s.

Lovejoy's death and the nation's reaction to it create the second stage of the myth making process. The myth of Elijah Parish Lovejoy developed almost immediately after his murder on the night of November 7, 1837. His death shocked the abolitionist world and stirred the nation. It instigated meetings throughout the North, inspired journalists, and spurred the nation to action. Although some articles condemned the actions of Lovejoy and supported the mob, he almost instantly become a hero; most newspapers called him a martyr to abolition and a martyr to the free press. Little known before, Lovejoy suddenly become the topic of a nation. His death had raised him to the status of a martyr and his legacy had begun. The question is, "Why?"

The nation saw Lovejoy as representative of republican ideals; virtue, temperance, liberty, and self-sacrifice. Lovejoy had sacrificed his life for the Republic in defence of democratic values. Lovejoy was also a man who feared absolute power. It led him to despise Catholicism (under its Papal authority), fear immigration, and eventually despise the slaveholder. American's saw Lovejoy's stance against the mob as a truly republican act. The Reverend Edward Beecher, President of Illinois College and close friend of Lovejoy, immediately recognized the significance of Lovejoy's death. The opening paragraph of his Narratives of Riots at Alton (1838) reads:

It often happens that events in themselves of no great importance, are invested with unusual interest in consequence of their connection with principles of universal application, or with momentous results. Of this kind are the events which preceded and led to the death of the Rev. Elijah P. Lovejoy: the first martyr in America to the great principles of the freedom of speech and of the press.¹⁰

¹⁰ Reverend Edward Beecher, Narrative of Riots at Alton: In Connection with the Death of Rev. Elijah P. Lovejoy (Alton: George Holton, 1838), 5.

Reverend Beecher could not have been more correct. People saw Lovejoy as an American hero. His death inspired John Brown, Frederick Douglass (the most influential black man of the nineteenth century), Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Harriet Beecher Stowe (who wrote Uncle Tom's Cabin, the novel that stirred and shocked the nation). These figures embraced Lovejoy as an American who defended republicanism in an age of moral decline and decreasing virtue. His defence of liberty and his sacrifice for the community had important connotations in a nation that fostered individualism. The widespread impact of his death led President Abraham Lincoln to later declare that, "the death of Lovejoy was the most important event that ever has taken place in the western world."¹¹

Lovejoy's myth took on new meaning following the Civil War. The survival of the Union was no longer in jeopardy. The institution of slavery had finally come to a close. Americans now focused on reuniting and becoming a stronger, more powerful nation in the late nineteenth century. They sought to create a common past that would bind all Americans together. Lovejoy's myth became a part of the American story. Although America was a far cry from the Republic the founding fathers had imagined, the nation continued to espouse republican values. There was a new and greater respect for American heroes who had fought for liberty, sacrificed their lives, and defended the Republic. Historical figures, like Paul Revere, Patrick Henry, and George Washington became widely celebrated. Lovejoy, or rather his myth, would also be remembered.

The state of Illinois erected a permanent monument in Alton to honor Elijah Parish Lovejoy on November 8, 1897, sixty years after his murder. On the centennial celebration of his death, President Herbert Hoover spoke at Colby College, Lovejoy's alma mater (then Waterville College). Hoover's speech, which spoke of the importance of a free press, left an indelible mark. The *New York Times* wrote:

Mr. Hoover has by his cogent and spirited address lifted the celebration of the centenary of the death of Elijah Lovejoy at Colby College in Maine into a national

¹¹ Ernest Cummings Marriner, The History of Colby College (Waterville, ME: Colby College Press, 1963), 42.

event... It is the daily, hourly battle of editors to discriminate between propaganda and the real news, between untruth and truth.¹²

Americans continue to honor Lovejoy's name in a variety of ways. Colby College began presenting the Lovejoy award to esteemed journalists and authors in 1952. David Halberstam, who received his award in November of 1997, gained national recognition for his uncompromised reporting from Vietnam in the sixties. Lovejoy was elected to the Editors Hall of Fame on October 12, 1928,¹³ and the Elijah Parish Lovejoy Society continues to honor and celebrate his name today. In November of 1997, the Society sponsored the hundredth year rededication of the monument in Alton. In more ways than one, Lovejoy has remained a part of our culture and heritage.

¹² Herbert Hoover, Addresses Upon the American Road: 1933-1938 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938), 24 of the inserted pamphlet.

¹³ Editors Hall of Fame (Memorial Booklet and Program of the Dedication and first Unveiling on Fri. Nov. 21, 1930. Established by the Illinois Free Press Association).

The Early Lovejoy

Elijah Parish Lovejoy was born in Albion, Maine on November 9, 1802 at a time when America rested on the brink of change and expansion. Albion was much like the rest of Maine in 1790, a mere "uncultivated wilderness," when Lovejoy's grandfather, Francis Lovejoy, brought his family there. Due to white settlers seeking prosperity, independence, and a new life, Maine's population increased from 96,540 in 1789 to 228, 687 in 1810.¹⁴ (Maine, however, still remained part of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts). Despite the flood of emigration to the Maine frontier and settlers' hopes of prosperity, the Maine wilderness did not have much to offer. Opportunities for education were limited and opportunities for the educated were even less. Families who scraped out livings by farming on small plots of land often found strength in religion. Elijah Parish Lovejoy's family was no exception.

Religion dominated Lovejoy's life from the very beginning, at a time when a new evangelical spirit gathered momentum throughout the nation. 1800 marked the outset of an era of Protestant reform known as the "Second Great Awakening." The Rev. Thomas Adams depicted a darkened age prior to this period while eulogizing Lovejoy's father Daniel: "[Daniel] was not brought into the kingdom of Christ, borne, as it were, on the tide of excitement, but it was when all was dark and cold around him, when professing Christians of any denomination were exceedingly rare..."¹⁵ Life would differ for Elijah Lovejoy. The historian William McLoughlin has suggested that:

The story of American Evangelicalism is the story of America itself in the years 1800-1900, for it was Evangelical religion which made Americans the most religious people in the world, molded them into a unified, pietistic-perfectionist nation, and spurred them on to those heights of social reform, missionary

¹⁴ John S.C. Abbott, The History of Maine from the Earliest Discovery of the Region by the Northmen Until the Present Time. (B.B. Russell: Boston, 1875), 397-425

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

endeavor, and imperialistic expansionism which constitute the moving forces of our history in that century.¹⁶

New denominations which recaptured the old New England Puritan religious and moral ethic began to flourish in the first half of the nineteenth-century. They demanded a pure and virtuous lifestyle free from drinking, smoking, infidelity, and other sins. Unlike Protestants of the older Calvinistic order, who believed in predetermined salvation, the new Protestants believed that salvation was obtainable for anyone who sought it. Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists attempted to spread the gospel and reform the nation's political and moral faults.

Evangelists were thus concerned with the increasingly insecure fate of Native Americans. Christians believed "Indians" could only achieve salvation by embracing the "civilized" world and leaving their "heathen" pasts behind. Missionaries attempted to convert the "savages" to Christianity and prepare them for a white man's world. The Reverend Daniel Lovejoy partook in several of these missions during Elijah's childhood. *The Society for Propagating the Gospel among the Indians and Others in North America*, which assigned the Reverend one such "Missionary" in District No. 5 of Maine in 1807, wrote out specific instructions for Daniel to follow:

You will diligently improve all opportunities of communicating religious instruction, by publicly preaching the great doctrines and duties of our holy religion, visiting from house to house, and catechizing the children in schools, and at times and places specially appointed for the purpose.¹⁷

The missions unfortunately did little to allay the heightening tensions between the Native Americans and the European settlers on the frontier. White settlers increasingly conflicted with the natives and the "Indian" population steadily declined throughout the eighteenth

¹⁶ William McLoughlin, ed., *The American Evangelicals, 1800-1900: An Anthology* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1976), 1.

¹⁷ Wickett-Wiswall Collection, 1807, June 1, Society for Propagating the Gospel among the Indians...to Daniel Lovejoy.

century. The Native American population in Maine had become all but extinct by 1820¹⁸, a phenomena which Lovejoy presumably witnessed.

Lovejoy observed several other changes throughout the country which undoubtedly influenced his childhood. The Louisiana Purchase of 1803, which enlarged the nation by nearly a third under the Presidency of Thomas Jefferson, made land easily attainable on the new frontier. Easterners and southerners flooding to the Midwest began new lives and pushed the Native Americans west of the Mississippi. Opportunity in the West appeared to be endless. The introduction of the steamboat stimulated even greater growth in the regions along the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. "Where once it had taken four months to pole a keelboat upstream from New Orleans to Louisville, by 1819 the steamboat had cut travel time to seventeen days."¹⁹ The expansion of the frontier, however, forced the nation to confront the rising problem of slavery. Territories could not remain impartial. The issue arose in Missouri (Lovejoy's future home) when enough people had settled to qualify the area for statehood. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 provided a temporary solution by enabling Missouri to enter the nation as a slave state, while allowing Maine, which had battled for separation from Massachusetts, to enter as a free state.

Elijah Lovejoy most likely did not encounter slavery firsthand growing up in Maine since Massachusetts had abolished slavery in 1788.²⁰ (Maine claimed two slaves in the entire nineteenth century, both of which were from Kennebec County and only appear in the 1830 census.)²¹ However, slavery was flourishing in other parts of the country. Eli Whitney's cotton gin had increased cotton production in the South and slaveholders' profits began to soar. Slaves became less expendable and southerners strove to strengthen the institution. Meanwhile, moral disapproval of slavery in the North intensified throughout

¹⁸ Abbott, 425.

¹⁹ Irwin Unger, These United States: The Questions of Our Past, 6th ed. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1995), 236.

²⁰ Abbott, 399.

²¹ Donald B. Dodd, Historical Statistics of the States of the United States: Two Centuries of the Census, 1790-1990 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 39.

the 1820s. Disputes between abolitionists and slaveholders, who now had to defend the institution, heightened the growing North–South division. The unsettled West found itself torn between the two sides and often became a battleground for conflicting views. Slavery, along with evangelicalism and expansion, gripped the nation during Lovejoy's life.

Elijah spent much of his early years learning the gospel. The Reverend Daniel Lovejoy and his wife Elizabeth, pious as she was, instilled a strict religious and moral code in their son. He could read the Bible by the age of four and soon filled his days by working on the land and reading. His younger brothers, Owen and John, later described Elijah as a hardworking young man: "Throughout his youth, the ends of the day saved from the axe, the plough, and the scythe, were all employed in the diligent use of books."²² Despite the work, Lovejoy found time to enjoy outdoor activities with his sisters and brothers, most commonly swimming in what is now Lovejoy Pond. He excelled in his district and Sabbath schools where he was particularly fond of poetry and religious hymns. Lovejoy's exceptional talent allowed him to advance his education past the age of eighteen, an uncommon feat on the Maine frontier. He briefly studied at the local Academy at Monmouth before falling under the influence of Henry Stanwood at China Academy. Stanwood, a recent graduate of the Theological Seminary at Waterville College, recognized Lovejoy's abilities and convinced him to study at Waterville.²³

Waterville College (now Colby College) was chartered in 1813 as the Maine Literary and Theological Institution under Baptist direction. It expanded into Waterville College in 1821 under the leadership of Jeremiah Chaplin, a Baptist minister of strict Puritan virtues. The State had allowed the change pending a promise that it would admit students and faculty of any religious denomination. Lovejoy, a Congregationalist, entered as one of the only sophomores in the fall of 1823 when he fell under the guidance of Chaplin. Despite their denominational differences, Chaplin's stringent religious teachings

²² Owen and Joseph Lovejoy, Memoir of the Rev. Elijah P. Lovejoy: Who Was Murdered in Defense of the Liberty of the Press at Alton, Illinois, Nov. 7, 1837. (John S. Taylor: New York, 1838), 17. cited hereafter as *Memoir*.

²³ *Marriner*, 118.

influenced Lovejoy. Chaplin spoke highly of his former student in a letter following Lovejoy's death:

During this period, he made no pretensions to experimental religion....he was never chargeable with making light of sacred things, or with favouring the cause of infidelity....his attendance on the services of the chapel was regular and respectful.²⁴

A typical day at Waterville College during the 1820s began before sunrise and offered little free time for students, who were required to follow a rigorous course schedule. Religion could not be stressed enough. The day began with morning chapel, included three recitations, and only ended with evening prayer. Although he excelled in his classes, Lovejoy had few friends and avoided social festivities. A poem by Lovejoy entitled The Little Star conveys his feelings at the time: "Thus have I felt-Oh God! why was I born A wretch all friendless, hopeless and forlorn"²⁵ He graduated at the top of his class in September of 1826. Lovejoy clearly displayed intelligence, religious devotion, and determination, but his life seemed to lack greater meaning and purpose.

He briefly taught at China Academy but soon became dissatisfied with teaching in Maine.²⁶ Lovejoy's ambitions, although still unclear, soon outgrew the limited opportunities of the Maine frontier and he decided to head west in May of 1827. The western frontier offered new and challenging opportunities where Lovejoy perhaps could find the excitement for which he yearned. His diary from his journey westward reveals a lonely man searching for order and meaning in his life. On May 30, Lovejoy stopped at the house of Josiah Bacon in Massachusetts where he wrote:

²⁴ Memoir, 298.

²⁵ Memoir, 22.

²⁶ Although one presumes that Lovejoy became dissatisfied with teaching and longed for something more, there is very little evidence of Lovejoy's exact motives or reasons for heading west. He, like many other Easterners, headed West to find new opportunities. Lovejoy didn't know himself where he would end up, apparently putting his trust in God.

I was a stranger and he took me in hungry, and fed me; may the blessings of heaven descend upon him. Much fatigued and able to travel but slowly--know not what maybe my fate--but feel determined to persevere--.... The Lord only knows what is for me. I would fain have hope for the future. But shadows, clouds and darkness rest upon it.²⁷

Despite becoming depressed, lonely, and sick, Lovejoy placed his trust in God and continued westward. He rested upon the belief of a divine destiny. A verse from a poem he wrote two months later on the shores of Lake Erie, entitled "The Wanderer," reveals a lost soul:

Of all that knew him few but judged him wrong:
 He was of silent and unsocial mood:
 Unloving and unloved he passed along:
 His chosen path with steadfast aim he trod,
 Nor asked nor wished applause save only of his God.²⁸

Lovejoy's sad and slow journey eventually ended in the fall of 1827 in St. Louis, Missouri, one of the most up and coming cities on the western frontier. Its location alongside the Mississippi River helped fuel its rapid development by drawing youthful emigrants from the East and South. Missouri's population rose from 66,557 to 140,455 in the years between 1820 and 1830.²⁹ However, St. Louis differed from larger, booming eastern cities such as Philadelphia, New York, or Boston. People on the frontier valued their independence and did not always accept the law, religion, or morals. Lovejoy described their character in a letter to his mother: "At the same time, I must confess that there are some most lamentable exceptions, and doubtless many a Yankee has fled here, whose vices forbade him an asylum among the descendants of the Puritans."³⁰ Mobs often decided the fate of individuals and dictated the cities' laws. Many "civilized" easterners felt

²⁷ Elijah Parish Lovejoy, Memorandum Book: Lovejoy Diary (Waterville, ME: Miller Library Special Collections)

²⁸ Memoir, 30.

²⁹ Dodd, 51.

³⁰ Memoir, 33.

disdainful of the rough and tumble frontier crowd. Lovejoy arove with these same prejudices.

Lovejoy began teaching after his arrival in St. Louis but, as he did in Maine, grew impatient with it. He bought a half interest in the *St. Louis Times* from the financially struggling T.J. Miller and began co-editing the paper with him on August 14, 1830. The *Times* was a political newspaper not atypical from any other paper on the western frontier; it engaged in political battles with competing newspapers, ran advertisements for the auction and sale of slaves, and took stands on local and national issues. Lovejoy supported Henry Clay, a Whig, and denounced the politics of President Andrew Jackson. His early political preferences reveal something of his character. Clay was a nationalistic leader who believed in a traditional republican government. He feared the increasing power of the President and viewed President Jackson's vetoes, "with extreme aversion and disgust."³¹ Lovejoy would later regard this corruption of power with equal distrust.

During his tenure as co-editor, Lovejoy had his first close experience with a slave. He used the slave William Wells Brown to do some extra work in his office. (It was not abnormal for slaveowners to rent out their slaves.) Brown later escaped slavery and became a popular novelist in England. He recounted the few days he spent with Lovejoy in his *Slave Narratives*. Brown described Lovejoy as, "a very good man, and decidedly the best master that I had ever had. I am chiefly indebted to him, and to my employment in the printing office, for what little learning I obtained while in slavery."³² Lovejoy sent Brown back to his master after a rough and bloody encounter with a slave hating St. Louis resident. Lovejoy apparently remained unaffected by the few days he spent with the slave and never mentioned the incident again. *The St. Louis Times* enjoyed a fair amount of success under Lovejoy's editorial pen.

³¹ Clement Eaton, *Henry Clay and the Art of American Politics* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1957), 91.

³² Gilbert Osofsky, ed., *Puttin' on Ole Massa: The Slave Narratives of Henry Bibb, William Wells Brown, and Solomon Northup* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 185.

A religious revival sweeping through St. Louis beginning in the spring of 1831 drew Lovejoy away from his post at the *Times*.³³ Lovejoy, who had become a member of the First Presbyterian Church, took a deep interest in the revival, but, much to his dismay, could not be converted to the covenant of God. He wrote, in a letter to his parents on January 24, 1832: "I attended the inquiry meetings, and for some time really felt a delight in religious exercises. But gradually these feelings all left me, and I returned to the world a more hardened sinner than ever before."³⁴ Although a devout Christian by twentieth century standards, Lovejoy had longed for a conversion which would finally give meaning and purpose to his life. His inability to dedicate himself fully and unequivocally to the gospel had been a constant source of frustration. The talented Reverend David Nelson finally succeeded in transforming Lovejoy, amongst many others, on February 12, 1832.³⁵ Lovejoy shortly thereafter wrote to his parents: "I was, by divine grace, enabled to bring all my sins and all my sorrows, and lay them at the feet of Jesus, and to receive the blessed assurance that He had accepted me, all sinful and polluted as I was."³⁶ He decided that his future lay with religion and shortly thereafter headed to the Princeton Theological Seminary in New Jersey.

The Seminary was founded in 1811 out of a struggling Princeton College with the intent of producing Presbyterian ministers as well as reforming the social ills of the college. Shortly after his arrival in March of 1832, Lovejoy sent a letter home announcing his plans: "And so I am here preparing to become a minister of the everlasting gospel!"³⁷ It was here that Lovejoy became an avid participant of the "Second Great Awakening." He left with a evangelical sense of purpose, ready to relieve the nation of its growing moral and religious flaws. After successfully completing the Theological Seminary, Lovejoy received his license to preach the gospel from the second Presbytery of Philadelphia. He briefly

³³ The last issue of the *St. Louis Times* with Lovejoy's name appeared on February 18, 1832.

³⁴ *Memoir*, 39.

³⁵ Paul Simon, *Freedom's Champion: Elijah Lovejoy* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994), 20-21.

³⁶ *Memoir*, 41.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 47.

preached in Newport, Rhode Island and at the Spring Street Church in New York City. However, Protestant businessman, (one of whom became the future governor of Missouri, Hamilton Rowan Gamble) looking to establish a weekly religious newspaper on the frontier captured Lovejoy's attention.³⁸ Much like the evangelists, the businessmen wanted to reform the sinful ways of St. Louis residents. Many religious papers had long existed in the East, such as the *New York Observer*, but few had taken root in the West. Lovejoy felt he could not bypass such an opportunity and once again headed west to St. Louis. His religious background and his editorial experience made him a perfect fit for the job.

Lovejoy issued the first edition of *The St. Louis Observer* on November 22, 1833 out of a small office in St. Louis. He clearly delineated his plans and aspirations for the paper in his first editorial: "One leading object of the *Observer* will be to diffuse information concerning the religious operations of the day, among Christians and other citizens of the West."³⁹ Lovejoy and the *St. Louis Observer* intended to advocate Protestant reform along the western frontier. Open and free discussion were essential to the paper and while Lovejoy sought no controversy, he claimed the right to print whatever he pleased. He wrote: "Peace will be its aim, as far as that is consistent with the defense of the Truth. Yet it will never shrink from the post of duty; nor fear to speak out lest some over sensitive ears should be pained."⁴⁰ Lovejoy had presumably found the role which he had sought since his youth.

The early editions of the *Observer* avoided political issues and kept the topics simple, preaching the gospel and teaching good morals. A front page section entitled The Daily Bread, provided weekly teachings and explanations of the gospel. Contributing writers of differing denominations warmly engaged in religious disputes over interpretations of the Bible. The *Observer* printed reports from missionaries who were

³⁸ Paul Simon, Freedom's Champion: Elijah Lovejoy (Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1994), 23.

³⁹ *Memoir*, 69.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 69.

attempting to Christianize humanity all over the world; it was a new age of evangelical reform and Lovejoy wanted to play his part. Lovejoy expressed the evangelical spirit in an editorial entitled *Conversion of the World*: "Alexander, and Caesar, and Napoleon, conquered provinces and kingdoms; but the soldier of the cross is engaged in conquering the WHOLE WORLD."⁴¹ As news traveled slowly in early eighteenth century America, the eastern religious papers, such as the *New York Observer* and the *New York Evangelist*, provided the *Observer* with much of its news. Continual reports about the attempt to Christianize the "heathens" of India, Asia Minor, and Africa frequently appeared in the *Observer*. The evangelical spirit that Lovejoy embraced led him to condemn alcohol and tobacco use, support missions to the Indians, and attack Catholicism.

Presbyterians believed that only high morals and strict reform could guarantee salvation. Lovejoy advocated old New England Puritan virtues which he had learned as a child and at Waterville College, temperance, hard-work, modesty, and fidelity. He admonished drunkards for poor and disruptive behavior on a weekly basis. Articles telling tales of drunkards' foolish behavior promoted temperance. Lovejoy also attacked smoking and chewing tobacco, habits he considered as bad as drinking. He preached passionately against the sins of gambling and the horrors of grog shops, which he associated with drinking. Lovejoy, however, was not always negative; he promoted the value of temperance and praised those who had recently reformed their ways. One subscriber struggling to pay his fee wrote: "I read [an article] and saw very plainly how I could continue the paper, and suffer no loss by doing so, and that was to abstain from smoking tobacco."⁴² Lovejoy took every opportunity to promote the Protestant ethic. He joined the Missouri Tract Society and the Missouri Bible Society, pushed to strengthen education on the Western frontier, reported the progress of recently established Sabbath schools, and preached to various congregations throughout the state.

⁴¹ *Memoir*, 79.

⁴² *St. Louis Observer*, 27 November 1834, 2.

Many Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, and Congregationalists took a sincere interest in the Native American's plight. "Missionaries" lived with various tribes in an effort to convert the "Indians" to Christianity. The reformers believed that Native Americans' salvation was dependent upon their willingness to integrate into a white Christian world. Although Lovejoy never lived with Native Americans, he followed in his father's footsteps by supporting the missionaries efforts. He specifically spoke against the whites who subverted the missionaries' efforts by increasingly selling whiskey to the "Indians." Lovejoy wrote in 1835: "The offence of thus poisoning the poor Indians by wholesale is rank-it smells to heaven."⁴³ The missionaries, however, knew little about tribal beliefs and therefore had little success with the Native Americans. Lovejoy's compassion for Native Americans, despite his use of the term "savages," was rare for the times.

Lovejoy's Presbyterian faith not only led him to take part in the reform movements, but fostered a deep hatred for Roman Catholicism. Denouncing popery had become central to the reform movements of the "Second Great Awakening" just as the Protestant Reformation in Europe had attacked the Catholic Church in Europe. Protestants viewed popery as a threat to the republican ideals of the nation. They viewed the Pope as a manifestation of absolute power, and feared a conspiracy of Catholics would destroy the Republic. Lovejoy later declared, "that Popery and Freedom, whether civil or religious, are incompatible with each other—they cannot coexist."⁴⁴ Lovejoy and the *Observer* freely denounced popery; criticism of transubstantiation, monasteries, and nunneries became central to the attack. The *Observer* also frequently denounced Jesuits and Baptists. (Lovejoy had come a long way from his religious training at Waterville. His conversion and training at Princeton had turned him into a hardened Presbyterian, often unforgiving and unaccepting of other denominations.) Lovejoy, however, only took a mild stance

⁴³ Sr. Louis Observer, 29 Oct. 1835, 1.

⁴⁴ Memoir, 114. from St. Louis Observer, 27 August 1835.

against Jesuitism and Catholicism in his first months as editor. His true opinions emerged later that year.

After months of discussing Catholicism and Jesuitism, Lovejoy took a more definitive position. On August 14, 1834 he wrote: "The evils produced by the Jesuits have been many and destructive."⁴⁵ Lovejoy made his position against popery clear less than a month later: "We have broken our truce with this spirit of darkness. Henceforth we stand in direct and unceasing, and uncompromising hostility to it."⁴⁶ Lovejoy was antagonistic towards the Baptists in November when he wrote: "Should they continue their evil ways, I will not promise to hold my peace."⁴⁷ Lovejoy's opposition to popery appeared commonly on the frontier; the historian Ray Billington has suggested that, "by the middle of the 1830's newspapers, magazines, lecturers and propaganda agents were co-operating through a national society in spreading calumny against Rome."⁴⁸ The Protestant movement took every opportunity to unite the world against the dangers of Catholicism.

A hatred for immigrants arose from the anti-Catholic teachings of Lyman Beecher and Samuel F.B. Morse, whose writings had influenced Protestants in the 1830s. Billington writes: "Beecher agreed with Morse that the despotic nations of Europe had determined to stamp out the republicanism of the United States by winning American converts and by sending popish immigrants to that country."⁴⁹ Lovejoy feared immigrants arriving in America and penetrating into the West for those same reasons; he especially distrusted the Irish because of their Catholicism. Lovejoy, however, was more welcoming towards the Protestant Germans whom he viewed as hardy, frugal and industrious people.⁵⁰ Although Lovejoy spoke highly of the German character, his attitude remained far from egalitarian: "Many Germans too, of the laboring class, are settling in the county;

⁴⁵ St. Louis Observer, 14 August 1834, 2.

⁴⁶ St. Louis Observer, 4 Sept. 1834, 2.

⁴⁷ St. Louis Observer, 6 Nov. 1834, 3.

⁴⁸ Ray Allen Billington, The Protestant Crusade 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1952.), 98.

⁴⁹ Billington, 126.

⁵⁰ St. Louis Observer, 9 January 1834, 2.

and though these will not much increase the intelligence, they will greatly add to the productive labor of the country."⁵¹

Of all the issues, reforms, and changes *The Observer* advocated, none gripped the nation's attention with the same intensity as slavery. Tensions between anti-slavery proponents and slaveholders mounted throughout the thirties. Staunch defendants of slavery came into direct conflict with a small but increasing group of abolitionists. William Lloyd Garrison created a stir throughout the nation by advocating immediate abolition in his paper, *The Liberator*. One Washington slaveholder wrote to Garrison: "Your paper cannot much longer be tolerated....Shame on the Freemen of Boston for permitting such a vehicle of outrage and rebellion to spring into existence among them."⁵² Garrison joined forces with Joshua Leavitt of New York, who published *The Emancipator*, Lewis and Arthur Tappan, and others to form the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1833. Although the increasing journals and anti-slavery societies slowly gained converts, most of the nation viewed the early abolitionists as incendiary fanatics and left them struggling for support. Elijah Parish Lovejoy refuted Garrison's and Leavitt's positions of immediate abolition by using the phrase, "overheated brains of the Northern Abolitionists."⁵³

Lovejoy, nevertheless, had come a long way from the days when he used Brown as a slave. His religious training had slowly changed his views and he supported colonization societies in his paper. Lovejoy complimented the Maryland Colonization Society in January of 1834 by saying: "We have no doubt that this enterprise will result, and at no very distant period too, in freeing Maryland from the curse of slavery."⁵⁴ His religious beliefs led him to view slavery as morally wrong, but he feared dreadful consequences within the nation if the black race suddenly gained freedom. Lovejoy did not want to incite

⁵¹ *St. Louis Observer*, 19 June 1834, 1.

⁵² John L. Thomas, *The Liberator William Lloyd Garrison A Biography* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1963), 133.

⁵³ *St. Louis Observer*, 1 May 1834, 3.

⁵⁴ *St. Louis Observer*, 30 January 1834, 2.

slave rebellions or punish the slaveholders; he believed that slavery could only come to an end through the teaching of the gospel and through God's will.

Lovejoy took greater interest in the issue as tensions rose throughout the nation, but clearly had difficulty taking a firm stand. Lovejoy sometimes defended the abolitionists and other times attacked them but always cautiously approached the subject, "Not because—as some of our Abolitionist brethren will charge us—we fear the truth, and are unwilling to perform our duty," wrote Lovejoy in June of 1834, "but, because there is real difficulty in ascertaining what that duty is."⁵⁵ Lovejoy commented on the abolition movement in Great Britain and the West Indies in the same piece: "Still, we believe the Abolitionists have done good. They have detected defects in the management of the Colonization Society."⁵⁶ Lovejoy, while supporting colonization, finished the editorial with the disclaimer: "We do not promise by any means, that we shall not become an Abolitionist, strictly, at some future day..."⁵⁷ One month later, Lovejoy harshly denounced the abolitionists as laboring, "under a lamentable, and to us unaccountable, hallucination,"⁵⁸ but later added that he would be forced to turn towards abolition, if blacks did not soon receive proper religious instruction. Lovejoy, like so many others during the period, struggled to find a comfortable position within the battle.

The debate over slavery came to a close in England on August 1, 1834 when the British Parliament liberated the slaves in every part of the British dominion. Lovejoy's paper reported the news on August 21, albeit, through an excerpt taken from the *New York Observer*. Lovejoy prefaced the article with a call to his southern brethren: "Beloved brethren, it belongs to you to act first on this subject, as you are in the midst of slavery."⁵⁹ He had difficulty understanding why so many Christians participated in the missions around the world but neglected the slaves. In November of 1834, Lovejoy wrote: "There

⁵⁵ *St. Louis Observer*, 19 June 1834, 3.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *St. Louis Observer*, 31 July 1834, 2.

⁵⁹ *St. Louis Observer*, 21 August 1834, 2.

is a great and very criminal apathy of feeling among the Christians of Missouri, as it respects the present and prospective condition of our slaves."⁶⁰ He was clearly concerned more with the slaves' religious salvation than their actual freedom. Lovejoy's opinions changed as news of the success of British emancipation slowly reached the states. He had feared immediate abolition, but Britain's example challenged him to reconsider his beliefs. He soon realized that he could not stand idly by while slaveholders and abolitionists fervently argued. Lovejoy welcomed the discussion of slavery into his columns for the first time in October of 1834 when he wrote: "We invite our friends to take it up. But let such as intend writing remember, that the subject is a peculiarly exciting one, and that they must be especially on their guard not to make their pen too sharp nor dip it in gall."⁶¹

Lovejoy spent most of his early years as a lost soul trying to find a purpose in the world. The "Second Great Awakening" and the evangelical spirit seemed to have taken hold of Lovejoy. He had found his niche in the world as editor of *The Observer*, through which he promoted strong Protestant values. Despite his efforts, Lovejoy spent the first year getting deeper into debt; *The Observer* had obtained only about 700 subscribers by July of 1834.⁶² Lovejoy, in a plea to his subscribers wrote: "The Observer' is falling into debt; and at the present subscription list and rate of increase, it will have to stop, certainly by the end of the year."⁶³ However, Lovejoy's life would take on a new direction after 1834. He would turn from being a man afraid of committing, to someone with a clear and definitive purpose. His conversion in 1832 and his stance against Catholicism had led the way for a greater challenge.

⁶⁰ St. Louis Observer, 27 November 1834, 3.

⁶¹ St. Louis Observer, 30 October 1834, 2.

⁶² St. Louis Observer, 17 July 1834, 2.

⁶³ St. Louis Observer, 17 July 1834, 2.

Lovejoy the Man

Lovejoy's editorials became tighter and sharper throughout 1835; the paper featured better and more informative articles. Lovejoy heightened his attack against Papists, immigrants, drunkards, smokers, and others. The topics discussed in the paper became more secular and the editor shortened The Daily Bread segment until it finally disappeared. The increased discussion of slavery marked the single greatest change in the paper. Whereas before only the occasional article appeared, the topic of slavery began to fill the columns. Lovejoy began to take a turn which would lead him down a dangerous path. He would soon assert himself against the perils of power and anarchy. The paper continued to struggle economically, but, more importantly, Lovejoy had begun to offend and aggravate St. Louis citizens with his views. Despite increasing tensions, he continued to take an active role in the community. Lovejoy became the treasurer of the Missouri and Illinois Tract Society, a stated clerk of the St. Louis Presbytery, and preached to congregations throughout the state. He was chosen as the moderator of the St. Louis Presbytery in the spring of 1836 and received the honor of serving as a delegate from Illinois for the Presbytery General Assembly.

The most significant event in Elijah Parish Lovejoy's personal life was his marriage to Celia Ann French, which took place on March 4, 1835. Lovejoy's words, in a letter to his mother, best describe her: "She is twenty-one years of age last August, is tall, well-shaped, of a light, fair complexion, dark flaxen hair, large blue eyes, with features of a perfect Grecian contour. In short, she is *very beautiful*."⁶⁴ The couple had a son, Edward Payson, in March of 1836. Very little is known of Lovejoy's private life. He rarely, if ever, revealed his personal life in the *Observer* and kept his home life separate from his work.

⁶⁴ Memoir, 133-134.

Lovejoy continued his assault against Roman Catholics, Jesuits, and Baptists in a more aggressive manner than before. He restated, on June 11, 1835, the earlier position of *The Observer* taken against Catholicism : "We maintain our warfare against the principles and dogmas of Popery, because WE BELIEVE THE CAUSE OF HUMANITY, OF FREEDOM, OF VITAL PIETY, IN A WORD, THE CAUSE OF TRUTH, DEMANDS IT."⁶⁵ Lovejoy saw Catholicism as a threat to democratic and republican principles. The Papacy represented unrestrained power and republicans, such as Lovejoy, feared nothing more. His attack became ruthless in 1835; he openly criticized communion, nunneries, and monasteries: "Read these and know that corruption, rank, and foul, has always steamed and is now steaming from the thousand monasteries, convents, and nunneries, that are spread, like so many plague spots, over the surface of Europe."⁶⁶ Lovejoy added that, "the Nunnery has generally been neither more nor less, than a seraglio for the friars of the monastery."⁶⁷ He despised the unchecked power of the friars. Lovejoy and other evangelists felt Catholicism threatened the republican nature of America. Billington writes: "[Catholic immigrants] would then rise in armed revolt and establish Popery and despotism in America."⁶⁸ His increased interest in politics therefore had a strong religious tone. Lovejoy wrote: "We wish everyman when he votes, to do it in the fear of God; and that is what we call a union of religion and politics."⁶⁹

The anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant movements led by Morse and Beecher had influenced the frontier and Lovejoy. Lovejoy's fear of the foreign despotism which could destroy the Republic led him to condemn the mass of immigrants arriving in America.. Lovejoy vilified foreigners as he never had before in the August 27 edition of *The St. Louis Observer*:

⁶⁵ Memoir, 111.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 108.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 109.

⁶⁸ Billington, 119.

⁶⁹ Memoir, 114.

What we warn our countrymen to be on their guard against, is, the hordes of ignorant, uneducated, vicious foreigners who are now flocking to our shores, and who, under the guidance of Jesuit Priests, are calculated, fitted and intended to subvert our liberties.⁷⁰

Lovejoy believed foreigners did not possess the virtue which was necessary to maintain the Republic. Furthermore, Protestants could advance their cause and the ideas of liberty by instilling fear of Catholicism and Jesuitism into people. Lovejoy's harsh attack on foreigners stemmed from this fear of despotic power, and therefore the Irish, being mostly Catholics, bore the brunt of the insults. Lovejoy undoubtedly had the Irish in mind, a group he viewed as dirty and immoral, when he continually referred to the threat of foreign Papists.

By the mid-1830s, Lovejoy had found another subject to protest against. Mobs and "lynchites" were becoming notorious throughout the country. An anti-Catholic mob had pillaged and burned the Ursuline Convent on August 11, 1834 in Charlestown, Massachusetts. Lovejoy mentioned the incident in his paper:

Mobs—Mobs! - CHARLESTOWN, Mass., has been disgraced by a mob. In consequence of a report, which turned out to be false, that a young lady was confined against her will in the nunnery of that town, the mob proceeded to summary vengeance and burned the nunnery to ashes. The loss of property was great, not far from \$50, 000.⁷¹

Another mob, angered by William Lloyd Garrison's inflammatory anti-slavery paper, caused a riot while attacking Garrison on Oct. 21, 1835.⁷² Mobs represented a break from civil authority and therefore threatened the Constitution. Bernard Bailyn writes that monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, "if unchecked, tended to degenerate into oppressive types of government—tyranny, oligarchy, or mob rule—by enlarging their own

⁷⁰ Memoir, 114.

⁷¹ St. Louis Observer, 4 Sept. 1834, 2.

⁷² Louis Filler, Crusade Against Slavery: Friends, Foes, and Reforms: 1820-1860 (Algonac, MI: Reference Publications, Inc., 1986), 99.

rights at the expense of the others' and hence generation not liberty and happiness for all but misery for most."⁷³ The actions of the mob, often dictated by drunken behavior, particularly displeased Lovejoy. Mobs were the antithesis of virtuous republicans. Lovejoy vilified all types of mobs, which included those attacking Catholicism, as in Charlestown. His hatred for violence compelled him to speak against mobs increasingly after 1835, when more often than not disputes arose over the slavery issue.

Lovejoy supported *gradual* abolition throughout most of 1835. However, he demanded that all cruel and unusual treatment of the slave must stop *immediately*. He attacked his brethren for not more fervently condemning the institution of slavery and argued that slaves must be taught the Gospel. Only then could they escape their "heathen" world and achieve salvation. In September of 1835, Lovejoy stated that, "it is impossible that a system can longer exist in this country, which thus deliberately shuts up immortal minds in all the darkness of heathenism."⁷⁴ Lovejoy's attitude was not atypical amongst evangelicals; Mark Noll suggests that, "the revival generated a highly charged sense of social responsibility in many of its converts, a passion to carry the message of life and love to others, including the slaveholder and the drunkard."⁷⁵ Lovejoy's changing view of slavery and abolition developed from his religious beliefs and a strong evangelical purpose.

Despite Lovejoy's belief in gradual emancipation and religious education for the slave, his earlier views must not be misconstrued as egalitarian. Lovejoy initially subscribed to many of the prejudices which were commonplace for his period. He never imagined blacks and whites living together and described "amalgamation" as, "certainly an abhorrent thing even in theory, and a thousand times more so in practice."⁷⁶ He still viewed colonization as the best solution to the race problem as late as April 16, 1835 when

⁷³ Bernard Bailyn, The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1967), 70.

⁷⁴ St. Louis Observer, 17 Sept. 1835, 2.

⁷⁵ Mark A. Noll et al., eds., Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond 1700-1990 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 210.

⁷⁶ Memoir, 145.

he wrote: "We only propose, that measures shall now be taken for the ABOLITION OF SLAVERY, at such distant period of time as may be thought expedient, and eventually for ridding the country altogether of a coloured population."⁷⁷ His prejudiced remarks continued throughout most of 1835. In an excerpt from a slave trader who stated, "I believe that more than half of them are as ignorant of the plan of salvation through a Redeemer, as the horses in their master's stables," Lovejoy added a note of his own which said, "We have no doubt that this is the literal fact."⁷⁸

Nevertheless Lovejoy conveyed different sentiments less than one month later, in January of 1836, when he wrote that, "We maintain that neither a priori, nor from any known facts, is there any reason to conclude the colored race to be by nature, one whit inferior, mentally or physically, to their white brethren."⁷⁹ It appeared that Lovejoy's views were taking another decisive turn. England had shown the world that abolition was safe and economical by May of 1835; slave labor had become less profitable than wage labor. The surprising success of emancipation in the British West Indies and Lovejoy's more egalitarian attitude towards the black race soon convinced him that colonization was no longer a feasible option. Lovejoy wrote, of one failing colonization society, that "We regard the late Annual Meeting of this Society as decisive of it's fate. Henceforth it has nothing to do but to die as decently as possible."⁸⁰ Lovejoy slowly changed his prejudiced images of African-Americans and continued to harden his stance against slavery.

Lovejoy's persistent discussion of slavery evoked violent threats from his community. The citizens of St. Louis held a meeting in October of 1835 to discuss Lovejoy and his paper, where they decided that freedom of speech, "does not imply a moral right, on the part of Abolitionists, to freely discuss the question of Slavery, either orally or through the medium of the press."⁸¹ The community had now accused Lovejoy

⁷⁷ Ibid., 126.

⁷⁸ St. Louis Observer, 24 Dec. 1835, 3.

⁷⁹ St. Louis Observer, 21 Jan. 1836, 2.

⁸⁰ St. Louis Observer, 28 Jan. 1836, 3.

⁸¹ Memoir, 138-139.

of being an abolitionist, although he consistently denied the charge. The citizens declared that, "we consider the course pursued by the Abolitionists, as one calculated to paralyze every social tie by which we are now united to our fellow men."⁸² They also accused the abolitionists of condoning amalgamation, which they saw as, "peculiarly baneful to the interests and happiness of society."⁸³ The final resolution of the meeting stated, "that we consider Slavery as it now exists in the United States, as sanctioned by the sacred scriptures."⁸⁴ Lovejoy refused to respond to these warnings and threats, even when requests to lessen the discussion of slavery came from the owners of the paper.⁸⁵

Lovejoy defended himself and the freedom of press in an editorial on Nov. 5, 1835 entitled "To My Fellow Citizens." He adamantly spoke against mob rule and lynch law, cited the section of the Missouri Constitution which enabled him to freely discuss any subject, and defended the abolitionists against the unworthy charges of amalgamation. Lovejoy also suggested that the real reason for the recent threats to *The Observer* stemmed from his attack on popery rather than slavery:

I repeat it, then, the real origin of the cry, 'Down with the Observer,' is to be looked for in its opposition to Popery. The fire that is now blazing and crackling through this city, was kindled on Popish altars, and has been assiduously blown up by Jesuit breath.⁸⁶

Lovejoy feared nothing more than the attempt of Catholicism to undermine the virtue of the people and thereby destroy the Republic; he saw the attempt to silence the *Observer* as part of a larger Papal conspiracy. Lovejoy was determined to appeal to the laws and the Constitution to defend his right to free speech. Upon their failure, Lovejoy declared that he

⁸² Memoir, 139.

⁸³ Ibid., 139.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 140.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 137-138.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 149.

would rest his case in the hands of God. He then took a final stand: "I openly and publicly throw myself into your hands. I can die at my post, but I cannot desert it."⁸⁷

In a letter written to his mother one month later, Lovejoy wrote that, "the *Lynchites* are getting ashamed of their doings. The Papists, the Irish, and the pro-slavery Christians finding that I am not to be driven or frightened away, are beginning to feel and act a little more reasonably."⁸⁸ He complained about Christians' apathy towards slaves and the poor state of the *Observer*. Lovejoy appeared confident, sincere, and determined in this letter. However, things did not quiet down. Another public meeting held on Dec. 6, 1835 showed Lovejoy that people's anger had not subsided.

Tensions briefly subsided in the early months of 1836 but Lovejoy and the *Observer* soon pushed the people of St. Louis beyond their tolerance levels. On May 5, Lovejoy enraged many in St. Louis when he editorialized upon the events of April 28, 1836. A scuffle between two "boatmen" or sailors took place at the steamboat landing in St. Louis on the 28th. A mulatto cook, Francis J. McIntosh, from the steamboat *Flora* apparently impeded the attempt of Deputy Sheriff George Hammond and Deputy Constable William Mull when they attempted to arrest the bickering "boatmen" for a breach of peace. The two deputies arrested McIntosh who, after learning he would receive five years of imprisonment, "broke loose from the officers, drew a long knife and made a desperate blow at Mr. Mull, but unfortunately missed him." The cook made a second attempt, "with the same savage violence," and landed a jab in Mull's side. Hammond grabbed McIntosh to restrain him, but the cook turned and fatally stabbed the deputy in the neck, "cutting the jugular vein and the larger arteries." Townsfolk, alarmed by shouts from Mull, "secured the bloodthirsty wretch and lodged him in jail."⁸⁹

That evening, a mob of the sort that Lovejoy continually reprobated, entered the St. Louis jail and kidnapped McIntosh. "All was still; men spoke to each other in whispers,

⁸⁷ Ibid., 154.

⁸⁸ Memoir, 159. (Lovejoy in a letter to his mother dated Nov. 23, 1835)

⁸⁹ Ibid., 169. (includes all quotations from the paragraph)

but it was a whisper which made the blood curdle to hear it, and indicated the awful energy of purpose, with which they were bent upon sacrificing the life of their intended victim."⁹⁰ The mob chained McIntosh to a nearby locust tree after they sent the guard away in fear. The mob threw down kindling wood until it reached the height of McIntosh's knees and lit a fire. McIntosh, amidst the flames, begged for someone to shoot him and then commenced with singing a hymn. After the hymn, silence prevailed. The mob assumed he had died until McIntosh, through the flames, shouted, "No, no; I feel as much as any of you, I hear you all; shoot me, shoot me."⁹¹ After the mob dispersed, two young boys, who had witnessed the scene, "commenced amusing themselves by throwing stones at the black and disfigured corpse."⁹² Lovejoy condemned the actions of the mob and the spirit behind "mobism" in his editorial:

In Charlestown it burns a Convent over the head of a defenseless women; in Baltimore it desecrates the Sabbath, and works all that day in demolishing a private citizen's house; in Vicksburg it hangs up gamblers, three or four in a row; and in St. Louis it forces a man—a hardened wretch certainly, and one that deserved to die, but not thus to die—it forces him from beneath the aegis of our constitution and laws, hurries him to the stake and burns him alive!⁹³

Lovejoy saw the actions of the mob as a threat to the constitution; he viewed the mob as part of a conspiracy trying to destroy the Republic.

Lovejoy's vilification of the mob and his sympathy for McIntosh angered the people of St. Louis beyond repair. A shortened version of the *Observer* on June 9, 1836, explained that, " someone forced his way into our office between Saturday night and Monday morning last, and so completely battered and upset our type that it was found impossible to issue our sheet in its usual size."⁹⁴ Lovejoy was attending the Presbytery

⁹⁰ Ibid., 170.

⁹¹ Memoir, 171.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid., 172.

⁹⁴ St. Louis Observer, 9 June 1836, 2.

General Assembly in Cincinnati during the incident. (The Presbytery indefinitely postponed discussion of the slavery issue, which was beginning to cause serious rifts amongst the Presbyterians. Lovejoy spoke harshly against the decision of the Assembly in his paper.)⁹⁵ In light of the events that had occurred in his absence, he decided to transfer *The Observer* across the Mississippi River and head upstream to Alton, Illinois upon his return. There, he hoped to gain a more receptive audience and avoid further victimization of the mob.

In the final issue that was printed in St. Louis, on July 21, 1836, Lovejoy unleashed his attack on Circuit Court Judge Luke E. Lawless. Lawless had presided over trials that followed the McIntosh incident.⁹⁶ Lawless's decision freed the mob from culpability and, therefore, sanctioned "mobism" in the eyes of Lovejoy. He condemned Lawless as foreigner who received, "his notions of government amidst the turbulent agitations of Ireland,"⁹⁷ as a Papist, and saw him as a threat to republican virtue:

Judge Lawless is a Papist; and in his Charge we see the cloven foot of Jesuitism, peeping out from under the veil of almost every paragraph in the Charge. What is Jesuitism but another name for the doctrine that principles ought to change according to circumstances?⁹⁸

Lovejoy's anger towards Lawless clearly stemmed from more than the judge's court decision; characters like Lawless would destroy the virtuous Republic.

A mob enraged over the criticism of Lawless prevented Lovejoy from peaceably removing his press to Alton. Lovejoy recounted the events in an *Observer Extra* dated August 10, 1836. A mob entered his office on Thursday evening (July 21); they upset the type and threw it into the street, thereby causing approximately 700 dollars in damage. Lovejoy still planned to move to Alton in spite of the inconvenience. The steamboat

⁹⁵ *St. Louis Observer*, 14 July 1836, 3.

⁹⁶ Very little information concerning the actual trials is available.

⁹⁷ *Memoir*, 175.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 176.

carrying the press landed in Alton on the Sabbath. Lovejoy had instructed to have it arrive on the following day. "About two o'clock at night, a few persons unknown, not exceeding five, made an attack upon this property, broke and destroyed the press, type, &c. and cast them into the river."⁹⁹ The mob may have come from St. Louis or Alton. In a meeting held the following night, citizens of Alton revealed their displeasure over the incident and expressed their fears of having an abolitionist paper in town.¹⁰⁰

Alton, an up and coming city in Illinois, had caught Lovejoy's eye from St. Louis during the spring of 1835. A detailed description of the city appeared in *The Observer* on Dec. 29, 1836. The population of about 2000 consisted largely of New Englanders, New Yorkers, some Southerners, and only about twenty or thirty "colored persons." (Lovejoy later called Illinois the New England of the West, complimenting its virtues.)¹⁰¹ The town's ideal location upon the Mississippi River had recently caused it to expand. "Scarcely a town site could have been selected on the Mississippi more unpromising in its appearance; and yet in five years, probably, it will attract the admiration of every beholder," predicted the *Observer*. There were four newspapers in Alton; the *Alton Telegraph*, a semi-weekly newspaper, the *Alton Observer* and the *Alton Spectator*, both weekly papers, and the *Illinois Temperance Herald*, a monthly publication. The *Observer* claimed to have about 1500 subscribers and the *Herald*, the largest of the papers, had approximately 5,000. The town was quite religious; nearly all the people closed their shops on the Sabbath and, "the foundations of prosperity are laid on the broad basis of public morals and Christian benevolence."¹⁰² Lovejoy, who valued Christian morals, hoped to have better success preaching religious reform here than he had in St. Louis.

Lovejoy printed the first issue of the *Alton Observer* on Sept. 8, 1836. It continued along the same course it had taken St. Louis, preaching religious reform,

⁹⁹ *Observer Extra*, 10 Aug. 1836, 1.

¹⁰⁰ *Alton Observer*, 8 Sept. 1836, 3.

¹⁰¹ *Alton Observer*, 23 March 1837, 3.

¹⁰² *Alton Observer*, 29 Dec. 1836, 3.

discussing slavery, and denouncing popery. Lovejoy was active in Alton; he continued to serve as a representative to the Presbytery General Assembly and became the Chairman/President of the Upper Alton Lyceum in November of 1836. The *Alton Observer* gained more than a handful of new subscribers each week (averaging about forty per week), due to a recent expansion of material. Although religion and Protestant reform continued to be the primary focus of the paper, Lovejoy now included more politics, economics, and other daily news. Slavery continued to take on greater and greater importance as well. Despite Lovejoy's persistent criticism of slavery and Catholicism, the winter and early spring of 1836/37 were relatively uneventful for the *Observer*.

Lovejoy's attack against slavery became harsher; he now openly criticized slaveholders and defended the slaves. He spoke emphatically, with quite a bit of cynicism in his tone, against a decision in Louisiana to sentence a slave to death for hitting a white citizen in October of 1836:

That is, for one man in Louisiana to strike another under certain circumstances is DEATH! These "certain circumstances" are
 1st. The man must be black.
 2d. He or his ancestors must have been stolen from Africa, and forcibly brought to this country.
 3d. He must be retained in slavery against his will.¹⁰³

Positive reports on emancipation kept coming from England; plantations in the British West Indies were now more easily and less expensively run.¹⁰⁴ More importantly, the evidence that blacks and whites were getting along influenced Lovejoy. He prefaced a headlining article discussing slavery, a position once filled by daily scripture lessons or religious arguments, with an advanced view for his times:

Truth is surely, though alas! too slowly gaining a victory over the mighty prejudices that have so long existed in the minds of the whites, in respects to the coloured race. Facts like those which follow cannot be resisted, and this lordly arrogation to himself by the white man of superiority over his coloured brother, and

¹⁰³ *Alton Observer*, 27 Oct. 1836, 2.

¹⁰⁴ *Alton Observer*, 13 Oct. 1836, 2.

on which assumption he has based the right to enslave the negro, must be yielded up.¹⁰⁵

The *Alton Observer* covered the history of the black race and highlighted their great accomplishments; the ancient Egyptians were often the focus. Lovejoy's notions of African-American inferiority had begun to dissolve while his disdain for slavery and slaveholders had grown.

Lovejoy took bolder stands on issues of slavery and race as the question of slavery within the nation became more heated. He defended Abolitionists against charges of "amalgamation" and declared that the offense was already prevalent throughout the nation: "Is not the Vice President of these United States, [Richard M. Johnson] and one of your own citizens, an 'amalgamator,' as you phrase it?"¹⁰⁶ Although Lovejoy still did not support immediate abolition and denied the charges of being an abolitionist, his views and the attitude of his paper had substantially changed. One angry citizen who had mistakenly subscribed to Lovejoy's paper, wrote of the *Observer* :

I was induced to subscribe for it—since I have seen one number, I am fully determined never to take another out of the office, and whether you are willing or not, you may discontinue it for the future—I never will pay for it, and the only wish I have upon the subject is that you, your press and your agent, were all in hell.¹⁰⁷

Lovejoy, in a letter to his mother, over a year earlier, wrote: "Mr. Adams of Brunswick, told me at the General Assembly, that he thought that I was doing more to put down Slavery than any other man in the United States."¹⁰⁸ His impact was certainly being felt.

Despite Lovejoy's optimism about his future in Alton, financial and economic crisis plagued the city in the spring of 1837; the nation plunged into the Panic of 1837. Local

¹⁰⁵ *Alton Observer*, 22 Dec. 1836, 1.

¹⁰⁶ Lovejoy, 200. Lovejoy claimed the Vice President had several daughters of mixed race. He also said that there were few remaining with a pure African complex.

¹⁰⁷ *Alton Observer*, 4 May 1837, 3.

¹⁰⁸ Memoir, 187. (In a letter to his mother dated August 31, 1836 from Alton.)

western banks which had operated unmonitored by any state or federal regulation began to fail. The land boom that had fueled the economy also collapsed. These two factors contributed to financial crisis and economic depression of 1837.

Lovejoy reprimanded the behavior he felt had caused the depression, gambling, greed, and extravagance. These were not the characteristics of virtuous republicans who believed in temperance, hard-work, and frugality. Lovejoy had even suggested the formation of an Anti-Extravagance Society in Illinois in early 1837. He gave his own rendition of the financial crisis in a piece entitled "The Bubble Burst, " which appeared in the *Observer* of May 25, 1837. Lovejoy, not surprised by the economic collapse, blamed those whose driving force was money:

The love of money is an earth-born, grovelling propensity, and it debases proverbially all whom it influences, in the precise proportion as they are under it's sway. How completely callous to all the dictates of conscience and humanity, and how shamelessly sordid it has rendered this nation, let the history of the last two years testify.¹⁰⁹

Lovejoy clung to the republican ideals of middling prosperity and the importance of community. It is clear that he was reacting against a more liberal and capitalistic society where the greed of an individual superceded his/her sacrifice to the community. Lovejoy indicted the scramble for money and material possessions as the source of luxury and licentiousness, both of which tended threatened classical republicanism. Lovejoy blamed the love of money for slavery and all the evils associated with it; he now saw the slaveholder as an example of corrupted power. The slaveholder and the Pope became symbols of absolute power which had the ability to destroy the Republic. Lovejoy ruthlessly attacked the slaveholder:

¹⁰⁹ Memoir, 189.

Men were either too busy in making money themselves, or too desirous to get a share of that earned by the forced labor of the poor slave, to hear his groans. His tears, mingled with his blood drawn by the whip of the merciless taskmaster, fell unheeded to the ground; and what cared they if the soil he tilled were thus enriched, so that they were permitted to share in the profits of the crop?¹¹⁰

Lovejoy had criticized the abolitionists for spreading such "lies" only a year or two before. In a letter to his brother Joseph dated Nov. 21, 1834, he wrote of Garrison, "He has been in a slave state, and he is therefore a dishonest man. How can you hold communion with such a foul-mouthed fellow."¹¹¹ Lovejoy was now attacking slavery and slaveholders as vehemently as any abolitionist.

Lovejoy fought hard for the anti-slavery cause as a delegate from Illinois to the Presbytery General Assembly. He reprimanded his brethren for their apathy towards the slaves while they focused much attention on "heathens" around the world. The General Assembly of 1837 could no longer avoid discussion of slavery, which they had postponed the year before. The members of the General Assembly struggled to find a middle ground throughout several meetings. The differences amongst the southerners, northerners, and westerners (a mixed bag) forced the Presbyterian Church to divide into a "new school" anti-slavery faction and an "old school" pro-slavery faction. Lovejoy was disgusted by the process and stated that the General Assembly had "died as the fool dieth."¹¹² This break tore the church in half, and became known as the schism of 1837. Lovejoy and his beliefs had epitomized many of the united reform efforts before the break; temperance, fidelity, and revivalism.¹¹³

Lovejoy pushed the people of Alton, who were already frustrated with their worsening financial situation, over the edge on July 6, 1837. He finally decided to promote the formation of an Illinois Anti-Slavery Society, which his friend Edward

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 190.

¹¹¹ Elijah Lovejoy in letter to Joseph Lovejoy dated Nov. 21, 1834, Wickett-Wiswall Collection.

¹¹² *Alton Observer*, 22 June 1837, 3.

¹¹³ For information on the the differences that led to the schism see, Fred J. Hood, *Reformed America* (Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1980).

Beecher, the President of Illinois College, had urged him to support in his paper. The citizens blamed Lovejoy for conceiving the idea, which was anything but true.¹¹⁴ On the same day that Lovejoy advocated the anti-slavery society, he printed an article which vehemently attacked the nation's July fourth celebration:

Alas! what bitter mockery is this. We assemble to thank God for our own freedom, and to eat and drink with joy and gladness of heart, while our feet are upon the necks of nearly THREE MILLIONS of our fellow men! Not all our shouts of self-congratulation can drown their groans—even the very flag of freedom that waves over our heads is formed from materials cultivated by slaves, on a soil moistened with their blood drawn from them by the whip of a republican task-master.¹¹⁵

Lovejoy now saw slavery, much like he viewed popery, as incompatible with freedom and the Republic.

Five nights later, concerned citizens of Alton held an anti-abolition meeting to discuss Lovejoy and his paper, referred to as the "Market House Meeting." The citizens reiterated their disapproval of Lovejoy and his paper and appointed a committee of five men to confer with Lovejoy.¹¹⁶ The committee sent a letter to Lovejoy on July 24 which requested him to drop the subject of abolition. He responded: "By doing so, I should virtually admit that the liberty of the press and freedom of speech, were rightfully subject to other supervision and control, than those of the land. But this I cannot admit."¹¹⁷ Lovejoy did not intend to agitate the people, but the discussion of slavery, he claimed, "necessarily agitated." Lovejoy's final stance had left the citizens of Alton with little choice, as they saw

¹¹⁴ Edward Beecher wrote in regards to the Anti-Slavery-Society, "Of this measure, too, Mr. Lovejoy is regarded as the author and prime mover, and he is supposed to have urged it on without consideration and judgement. The truth is, it was urged on his attention by others in different parts of the state; and was by him from time to time delayed." Beecher, 20.

¹¹⁵ *Alton Observer*, 6 July 1837, 2.

¹¹⁶ The committee consisted of B.K. Hart, L.J. Clawson, N. Buckmaster, A. Olney, and John A. Halderman. They were all well respected citizens within the community. Lovejoy, 227.

¹¹⁷ *Memoir*, 228.

it; a mob entered Lovejoy's office on August 21 and destroyed his press and threw the remains in the river.¹¹⁸

Lovejoy and friends of the *Observer* immediately decided to order a third press. In a letter to his mother dated September 5, he wrote: "Do not think, mother, that I am disheartened or discouraged. Neither is true. I never was more convinced of the righteousness of the cause, and the certainty of its ultimate triumph."¹¹⁹ Lovejoy noticed, however, that his brethren friends had not unanimously supported him. On September 11, 1837, in a letter addressed to the Friends of the Redeemer in Alton, he wrote: "Most cheerfully will I resign my post, if in your collective wisdom you think the cause we all profess to love will thereby be promoted." He added, "I had, at first, intended to make an *unconditional* surrender of the editorship into your hands. But...I have, by the advice of a beloved brother, determined to leave the whole matter with you."¹²⁰ Lovejoy appeared unusually willing to resign as editor for someone who usually wrote with conviction and determination. The proprietors decided that the paper must continue in Alton with Lovejoy as the editor, despite his concerns.

The mob destroyed Lovejoy's third printing press on the night of its arrival in Alton, September 21. Members of the mob, apparently seeking more than the destruction of the press, followed Lovejoy to his mother-in-law's house a few nights later. They entered the house and took hold of Lovejoy. Lovejoy's wife entered the room, where, "one 'chivalrous' southerner actually drew his dirk upon her. Her only reply was to strike him in the face with her hand, and then rushing past him, she flew to where I was, and throwing her arms around me, boldly faced the mobites, with a fortitude and self-devotion which none but a woman and a wife ever displayed."¹²¹ The "energetic measures" of Lovejoy's wife, along with the help of her mother and sister, temporarily dispersed the mob. Lovejoy escaped out a back door and headed to a friend's house before the mob

¹¹⁸ This was the last date that the *Observer* was issued with Lovejoy's name on it.

¹¹⁹ Memoir, 232.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 248-249.

¹²¹ Ibid., 253.

could return. (Lovejoy decided to run only after a great deal of convincing from his family; he thought it went against his principles.) Lovejoy made the crucial decision to take up arms the following evening. The decision represented a break in the editor's pacifist beliefs. Lovejoy wrote to Brother Leavitt, "A loaded musket is standing at my bed-side, while my two brothers, in an adjoining room, have three others, together with pistols, cartridges, &c. And this is the way we live in the city of Alton!"¹²²

Despite his fears, Lovejoy planned to remain in Alton and help reestablish the *Observer*. Citizens held a public meeting on November 2 in order, "to take into consideration the present excited state of public sentiment in this city, growing out of the Abolition question."¹²³ Reverend Edward Beecher proposed several resolutions in Lovejoy's and the free press's favor. However, the crowd at the meeting, consisting of respectable Alton citizens, adamantly rejected Beecher's ideas and replaced them with a new set of resolutions on the following afternoon. The fourth resolution stated that, "it is deemed a matter indispensable to the peace of and harmony of this community that the labours and influence of the late Editor of the 'Observer' be no longer identified with any newspaper establishment in this city."¹²⁴ Lovejoy responded with a passionate plea:

I plant myself, sir, down on my unquestionable *rights*, and the question to be decided is, whether I shall be protected in the exercise, and enjoyment of those rights—*that is the question, sir*;—whether my property shall be protected, whether I shall be suffered to go home to my family at night without being assailed, and threatened with tar and feathers, and assassination; whether my afflicted wife, whose life has been in jeopardy, from continued alarm and excitement, shall night after night be driven from a sick bed into the garret to save her life from the brickbats and violence of the mobs; *that sir, is the question.*¹²⁵

Lovejoy broke into tears at this point. He managed to finish his appeal with the prophetic remark: "If the civil authorities refuse to protect me, I must look to God; and if I die, I

¹²² *Memoir*, 258.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 268-269.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 274.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 280.

have determined to make my grave in Alton."¹²⁶ Despite this speech, the mob remained unaffected and tensions mounted. All eyes focused on the arrival of the new press.

The press arrived on Sunday, Nov. 5. Lovejoy and friends, who had prepared for its arrival, quickly placed it behind the thick walls of the warehouse of Godfrey, Gilman & Co. Several volunteers guarding the warehouse left after two uneventful nights and twelve defenders stayed behind, including Lovejoy. On the night of Nov. 7, 1835 at about ten o'clock in the evening, "the drunkeries and coffee-houses began to belch forth their inmates, and a mob of about thirty individuals, armed, some with stones, and some with guns and pistols, formed themselves into a line on the south end of the store." William Carr, the leader of the mob, demanded to have the press. The mob, which consisted of many respectable citizens¹²⁷, grew restless and began throwing stones and sticks at the windows of the warehouse. "After throwing stones for some time, the mob fired two or three guns into the building, without however wounding any one." The defenders responded with shots of their own, mortally wounding one man, Lyman Bishop. The mob temporarily dispersed to intoxicate themselves some more.¹²⁸

"After a visit to the rum-shops, they returned with ladders and other materials to set fire to the roof of the warehouse, shouting with fearful imprecations and curses, 'Burn them out, burn them out.'"¹²⁹ The mob now numbered between 150 to 300.¹³⁰ The mayor of Alton, John Krum, arrived on the scene. "He was then asked [by the defenders] if they should defend their property with arms, he replied as he had repeatedle before, that they had a perfect right to do so, and that the law justified that course."¹³¹ Krum made a short and rather weak attempt to keep the peace, but fled the scene after having no success. Armed defenders of the press emerged from the building and fired shots at a man on a

¹²⁶ Ibid., 281.

¹²⁷ There were at least three physicians, one of whom, Dr. Hope, later became mayor of Alton. Other members included James Rock, Dr. Beal, and Dr. Jennings. Simon, 141.

¹²⁸ The story of the fight is told in Memoir, 284-293.

¹²⁹ Memoir, 289.

¹³⁰ Simon, 126.

¹³¹ Memoir, 290

ladder who was trying to light the roof on fire. Upon a second attempt to fire the roof, Lovejoy stepped out armed with two others following behind. "Several of the mob had in the meantime, concealed themselves behind a pile of lumber that lay at a short distance. One of them had a two-barrelled gun and fired."¹³² Lovejoy received three balls in his breast, one in the abdomen, and one in his left arm. After exclaiming, "Oh God, I am shot, I am shot," he died on the steps of the warehouse.¹³³ The other defenders quickly dispersed and the mob threw the press in the river for the fourth time. Elijah Parish Lovejoy was buried on Nov. 9, 1837, on his thirty-fifth birthday.

¹³² Ibid., 291.

¹³³ One account of the story by John Wesley Harned, claimed that the murderers were not actually behind the wood pile but , "hidden behind piles of pig lead thirty or forty paces below the building." Harned also stated that Lovejoy was unarmed when he emerged from the building, although it is most likely that he held a weapon. Killing of Elijah Lovejoy Recalled by Eyewitness, Lov 6 H3, Miller Library, Waterville, ME.

The Myth Begins

The story in Alton was a sad one; the immediate reaction to Lovejoy's death in Illinois appeared to be at best trivial. Cheers which celebrated the victory of the Alton mob greeted Lovejoy's body as friends carried it through the city streets the morning after his murder. His funeral attracted no more than a few friends.¹³⁴ His family lived in fear of the mob who had threatened to kill every abolitionist in the city, Lovejoy being but one of them. The attempt to reestablish the *Observer* under the new editorial leadership of Elisha W. Chester in Cincinnati lasted only four months. Court trials in January which placed the defenders of the press on the stand only added insult to injury.¹³⁵ No one was convicted for Lovejoy's murder. The apathy in Alton prompted abolitionist Theodore Dwight Weld to write: "Where are the murderers of Lovejoy? 'Free;'— going at large with law for a volunteer escort, holding up their bloody hands along the streets of Alton, and telling how they killed him."¹³⁶ It appeared that Lovejoy had died in vain.

Americans struggled to find an identity throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. They grappled with changing economic and social conditions while striving to maintain a successful democracy. Americans of the Revolutionary period had valued republican ideals of virtue, independence, and liberty. Robert E. Shalhope writes that, "republicanism meant maintaining public and private virtue, internal unity, social solidarity, and vigilance against the corruptions of power."¹³⁷ It was this corrupted power that

¹³⁴ Paul Simon, Freedom's Champion: Elijah Lovejoy (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994), 135

¹³⁵ The city charged the owner of the warehouse, Winthrop Gilman, with the offence of inciting riots. The jury, however, acquitted Gilman after they heard several witnesses inculcate the mob for firing the first shots. The city attorney acquitted the eleven other defenders with no trial. The People also brought members of the mob, including Frederick Bruchey, William Carr and James Rock to trial for the same charge. Despite strong evidence against them, the jury pronounced them not guilty in court trials held on January 21, 1838. Taken from *Alton Telegraph*, Jan. 24, 1838, found in, *Memoir*, 285-289

¹³⁶ Theodore Weld in a letter to S. Webb and Wm. H. Scott, dated Jan. 3, 1838 found in: Gilbert H. Barnes and Dwight L. Dumond, eds., Letters to Theodore Dwight Weld, Angelina Grimké Weld, and Sarah Grimké 1822-1844 (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1965), 512.

¹³⁷ Robert E. Shalhope, "Republicanism and Early American Historiography," William and Mary Quarterly Vol. 39, 1982, 335.

Americans feared would destroy the Republic. They looked to the ancient Roman Republic, which had turned into an empire and ultimately failed when power had ended up in the wrong hands, as an example. Classical republicanism also included industry or hard work, middling prosperity, frugality, temperance, and liberty. Most essential to republicanism was the idea of self sacrifice; an individual must have the willingness to sacrifice his or her needs and desires for the good of the community, or the commonwealth. A republic would invariably fail without the participants' willing concessions of personal goals to larger communal goals.¹³⁸

The Revolution had, however, produced a second major ideology which manifested itself in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The republican ideology so espoused at the turn of the century began to conflict with an arising democratic liberalism. Steven Watts defines this liberal ethos as a devotion to, "individual expression, social mobility, pragmatic self-interest, and protection of property rights."¹³⁹ The opportunity for advancement superceded permanent class distinctions and the individual became more important than the community. Steven Watts writes: "Under pressure from changing social conditions and cultural values, the idealized figure of the independent republican producer changed shape into the striving self-made man."¹⁴⁰ Americans embraced free markets, competition, and expanded trade. Industry grew larger due to rapid population growth, new technology, and the drive for profit. A new American full of greed, ambition, and individuality began to replace the old republican neighbor expounding virtue, community, and self-sacrifice. The realities of a capitalistic and industrializing nation destroyed Jefferson's dream of a nation full of virtuous yeoman farmers.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Robert Shalhope, Steven Watts, and Bernard Bailyn, The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1967), Joyce Appleby, Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), and introduction to Gordon S. Wood, ed., The Rising Glory of America, 1760-1820 (New York: George Braziller, 1971) all provide good information on republicanism.

¹³⁹ Watts, xv.

¹⁴⁰ Watts, 14.

¹⁴¹ See Watts, Appleby, Shalhope, and Wood.

Despite this change, America appeared to be thriving as a democracy in the early nineteenth century. Yet, it had by no means eliminated the possibility of failure. Changing social, cultural, and economic conditions left America in a less than stable position. "So while many Americans sought the freedom of the liberal ethos after the revolution," writes Watts, "they searched simultaneously for new means to stabilize its centrifugal momentum and avoid chaos."¹⁴² Americans still feared the possibility of corrupted power; virtue, temperance, and self-sacrifice became crucial to the survival of the Republic. Religious movements of the Second Great Awakening adopted and transformed secular republican values. Gordon Wood writes that, "religious groups and others responded to the cause of virtue with a stridency and zeal that went beyond what any classicist in 1776 could have imagined possible."¹⁴³ "He continued, "temperance, for example, that self-control of the passions so valued by the ancients, became largely identified with the elimination of drunkenness."¹⁴⁴ At the same time, Americans espoused classical republicanism. They needed to promote these republican ideals, which included virtue, temperance, middling prosperity, and industry. They turned to the founding fathers or the patriots as those who embodied republicanism.

George Washington was one of the first founding fathers whom Americans embraced. His prestige and popularity, earned during the Revolution, led Americans to elect him the first President. Americans venerated him for the republican values he represented, liberty, virtue, and self sacrifice. Washington had sacrificed his own well-being to serve the nation several times; he had fought for the country at Valley Forge, led troops across the Delaware, and came out of retirement to serve the nation as President. Stories of Washington soon turned into national myths; Mason Weems' biography of Washington in 1800 turned the President into a mythic hero. He told the familiar story of Washington as a young boy and the cherry tree. Washington's most famous line: "I can't

¹⁴² Watts, 14.

¹⁴³ Wood, 12.

¹⁴⁴ Wood, 13-14.

tell a lie, Pa; you know I can't tell a lie," originated in Weems' mythic tale.¹⁴⁵ The story, which teaches Americans of virtue, independence, and honesty, reveals much about our desired national character. The tale has thereby survived generation after generation and, as Robertson writes, "shows little sign of decay."¹⁴⁶

Mythic images of John Adams, Patrick Henry, Paul Revere, and Thomas Jefferson, all of whom exemplified republicanism, soon followed. Robertson writes that, "the function of these myths, and the reason for the annual ritual celebration, is to project specifically American ideals as imperatives in all Americans." In the early nineteenth century, republicanism was the "specifically American ideal" which myths tended to promote. Americans were the most virtuous, hard-working, and liberty prone people in the world. Patrick Henry is best remembered for his dramatic words, "Give me liberty or give me death!"¹⁴⁷ Eb Stiles, a Yankee bard, composed a poem about Paul Revere in 1795, that exaggerated his feats to create a unique and powerful hero. Stiles depicted Revere's deed as an act of self-sacrifice. Revere had put his life on the line in order to save the colonists from the British. David Hackett Fisher writes, "It was in the nature of a mythic hero to transcend the limits of mundane fact. So it was with Eb Stiles' poetic image of Paul Revere."¹⁴⁸ Similar cases would soon follow for Jefferson and others.

These popular "legends" of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century had all passed away by the 1830s. However, tales and myths of their lives touched all Americans, who venerated the "founding fathers" for their virtue and integrity. The new generation needed to search for heroes fitting to their own age, ones that could demonstrate that morals, virtue, community, "vigilance against corruptions of power", and sacrifice¹⁴⁹ had not been perverted by capitalism. But how could anyone live up to the reputation of the first patriots and founding fathers? The myths of Paul Revere, Washington and others

¹⁴⁵ James Oliver Robertson, American Myth, American Reality (New York: Hill & Wang, 1980), 11.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁴⁸ David Hackett Fisher, Paul Revere's Ride (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 328.

¹⁴⁹ Shalhope, 335.

ingrained a sense of perfection in Americans. No one could be as courageous as Paul Revere, as brilliant as Jefferson, or as patriotic as Washington. Yet, Americans would try.

Elijah Parish Lovejoy became one of the heroes Americans sought. He represented moral responsibility, integrity, and righteousness in an age of declining republicanism. Lovejoy had promoted the republican ideals of temperance, virtue, and community. Robert E. Shalhope suggests that, "a people practicing frugality, industry, temperance, and simplicity were sound republican stock, while those who wallowed in luxury were corrupt and would corrupt others."¹⁵⁰ More importantly, Lovejoy had epitomized many of the social and intellectual forces which defined his generation, evangelicalism, anti-Catholicism, anti-immigration, and anti-slavery, all of which were associated with republican values. Americans saw the Pope and slaveholder as examples of power that had the ability to undermine the virtue of the people and ultimately destroy the Republic. Immigrants, often portrayed as minions of the Papacy, did not possess the American values necessary for sustaining a republic. Furthermore, evangelicalism had long associated itself with patriotism; Protestants promoted temperance, fidelity, and frugality. Wood writes that, in the early nineteenth century, "the republican citizen had become a Christian democrat."¹⁵¹ An ideal republican lay at the heart of Lovejoy. Americans, therefore, adopted Lovejoy as an American hero, much like Washington or Revere. They would celebrate his actions and tell mythic tales of his heroism.

His myth, or new identity, developed between his death and the Civil War, however the end of his life had set the stage for his martyrdom. Lovejoy increasingly spoke against slavery throughout his tenure as editor of the *Observer*. Although the primary purpose of the paper continued to be religious, the slavery issue dominated the columns by 1837. The citizens of Alton attacked Lovejoy for being an abolitionist and blamed him for conceiving the idea of the Illinois Anti-Slavery Society. Lovejoy reacted to the citizens' grievances and revealed his true sentiments in an editorial entitled, "What are

¹⁵⁰ Shalhope, 335.

¹⁵¹ Wood, 14.

the Doctrines of Anti-Slavery Men?" It appeared in the *Observer* of July 20, 1837, less than one month before the final issue of the *Observer*. Lovejoy justified his changing attitudes:

In respect to the subject now to be discussed, the writer frankly confesses no one of his readers can possibly be more prejudiced, or more hostile to anti-slavery measures or men, than he once was. And his, too, were honest, though, alas! how mistaken, prejudices.¹⁵²

He defended the abolitionists and united the cause of abolition with the founding principles of the nation. Lovejoy linked the freedom of the slave to the republican ideals of the nation: "Abolitionists hold that 'all men are born free and equal, endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, LIBERTY, and the pursuit of happiness.'" ¹⁵³ He continued, "[Abolitionists] do not believe that these [rights] are abrogated, or at all modified by the colour of the skin, but that they extend alike to every individual of the human family."¹⁵⁴ Lovejoy never before had sounded so egalitarian. His editorial appealed to America's love of republicanism and the founding fathers; he mentioned Washington, Warren, Adams, and Hancock; those who fought for liberty, equality, and justice. His character would soon take on these same values.

Lovejoy's death was the genesis of his myth. "Death, like any other human endeavor, is an art, and if martyrs are to prevail, they must die, to use Sylvia Plath's expression, 'exceptionally well,'" ¹⁵⁵ writes Lacey Baldwin Smith. The timing and mode of Lovejoy's death could not have been better planned. Furthermore, the scene at the warehouse solidified Lovejoy as a republican hero. Lovejoy fought against the mob, a group which represented the antithesis of good republican behavior; mob rule would destroy the Republic. Lovejoy had also displayed his willingness to sacrifice his life in

¹⁵² *Memoir*, 235.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 235-236.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 236.

¹⁵⁵ Lacey Baldwin Smith, *Fools, Martyrs, Traitors: The Story of Martyrdom in the Western World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 11.

order to guarantee the American liberties of free speech and freedom of the press.¹⁵⁶ Lovejoy made the ultimate sacrifice when his stance led to his own murder. "Since furthering the public good—the exclusive purpose of republican government—required the constant sacrifice of individual interests to the greater needs of the whole," writes Shalhope, "the people, conceived of as a homogenous body (especially when set against their rulers), became the great determinant of whether a republic lived or died."¹⁵⁷ Republicanism necessitated putting the virtue of the community before oneself. Lovejoy had sacrificed himself in an age seemingly devoid of republican virtue.

The nation's reaction to Lovejoy's death was a far cry from the response of Alton citizens; Americans immediately championed him as a martyr to abolition and a martyr to freedom of the press. However, Americans needed to mold Lovejoy before they could fully embrace him. They needed to forget about his negative attributes and celebrate his positive qualities. The historian William H. McNeill identifies this as "pattern recognition." He writes: "Only by leaving things out, i.e., relegating them to the status of background noise deserving only to be disregarded, can what matters most in a given situation become recognizable."¹⁵⁸ Slowly the hero loses any negative traits and becomes flawless in the eyes of the beholder. Americans ignore the fact that Jefferson owned slaves, that Washington was elitist, and Adams was pompous. The myth which promotes certain qualities or ideals is thereby successful.

Americans molded Lovejoy into an American hero possessing American values by stripping him of any unnecessary attributes. The nature of republicanism, however, had changed in the years following Lovejoy's death. The Presbyterian schism had weakened the evangelical reform movement and the period of the "Second Great Awakening" came to a close. Fred J. Hood suggests that, "the schism between the Old

¹⁵⁶ Free speech was by no means secure in 1837, as we tend to think it is today.

¹⁵⁷ Shalhope, 335.

¹⁵⁸ William H. McNeill, Mythistory and Other Essays (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 5.

School and New School Presbyterians in 1837 symbolized the end of an era."¹⁵⁹ Furthermore, although anti-Catholic sentiment did not fade away, united movements against the Papacy slowly declined throughout the 1840s.¹⁶⁰ The issue of slavery would take precedence over all other concerns in the years preceding the Civil War. Americans shaped Lovejoy's myth accordingly. Evangelicalism, anti-Catholicism, and anti-immigration, ideals which were no longer pertinent to republicanism, faded from Lovejoy's character. The myth making process transformed Lovejoy from, primarily, a religious figure into a secular, republican hero. He became the first martyr to the freedom of the press and the first martyr to abolition.

The press played a crucial part in the myth making process. Lovejoy was relatively unknown to the nation before his death. The *Observer* was small by eastern standards; it had reached only two thousand subscribers before its demise. The press, therefore, had the power to shape Lovejoy's image throughout the nation. It could belittle his importance by defending the mob and presenting him as a fanatic. By venerating Lovejoy, the press could immortalize him. It chose the latter option and embraced Lovejoy as someone who embodied republicanism. It molded Lovejoy into a virtuous republican and ignored his stance against Catholicism, his disdain for immigration, and his preaching of religious reforms. The press celebrated his stance against slavery and his defense of a free press.

Lovejoy's legend took little time to spread, much like those of the founding fathers. The *St. Louis Bulletin*, an anti-abolitionist paper, feared the worst for their cause: "Be the offenses of Lovejoy what they may-if he has violated every law of the land, and outraged every feeling of society, and every principle of moral and social duty," (which we know he did not), "-the end of his unfortunate career-the mode and measure of his punishment, has changed the offender to a martyr, and the presuming, daring sinner to an

¹⁵⁹ Fred J. Hood, Reformed America: The Middle and Southern States, 1783-1837 (Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1980), 169.

¹⁶⁰ Ray Allen Billington, The Protestant Crusade provides information on the decline of a united anti-Catholic movement.

apostle of righteousness and a saint."¹⁶¹ The *Bulletin*'s prediction was right. Newspapers overwhelmingly sympathized with Lovejoy and turned him into the first martyr to the free press and the first martyr to abolition. The papers in the East, mostly in New England, venerated Lovejoy as a truly republican hero. The *Vermont Brattleborough Phoenix* wrote of Lovejoy: "As a patriot, a lover of the constitution and laws of his country, and the rights of freemen, his name should be written beside those venerable compeers who have battled with the minions of corrupt power, and the doctrines of man's inferiority."¹⁶² The *Maine Wesleyan Journal* crowned Lovejoy the first martyr in the cause of abolition¹⁶³ and the *Belfast Journal* called him, "a martyr in the cause of liberty of speech and the press."¹⁶⁴ The press changed the image of Lovejoy. The *New York Journal of Commerce* called him an abolitionist who was, "determined to publish an Abolitionist paper in Alton."¹⁶⁵ As Lovejoy's heroic image became greater and greater, the disdain for the mob grew worse and worse. Americans transformed the respectable citizens of the mob into dirty, cruel, and immoral charcters. The *Brattleborough Phoenix* described the mob as, "cold-blooded villians, whe were daily threatening to trample, rough shod, upon the rights of property and life."¹⁶⁶ These newspapers began the myth of Lovejoy.

The Eastern abolitionists also championed Lovejoy as a martyr, although some lamented Lovejoy's decision to take up arms. Abolitionists promoted the doctrines of republicanism, which included temperance, liberty, and vigilance against power. The instition of slavery undermined the nature of the Republic. They too realized the importance of self-sacrifice and knew that Lovejoy's death could advance their cause. The anti-slavery proponent William Channing wrote: "One, kidnapped, murdered Abolitionist would do more for the violent destruction of slavery than a thousand [Abolitionist]

¹⁶¹ *New York Observer*, 25 Nov. 1837. (article reprinted from the *St. Louis Bulletin*)

¹⁶² *Memoir*, 326-327.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 322.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 323. (The *Memoir* has a good selection of newspaper articles written shortly after his death.)

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 333.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 327.

societies."¹⁶⁷ The *Belfast Journal* stated: "[Lovejoy's murder] will do more for the Abolition cause, than could a score of presses and a hundred missionaries."¹⁶⁸ The American Anti-Slavery Society officially celebrated Lovejoy's martyrdom. They issued writing paper with a memorial crest on each page. Within the crest were the words, "LOVEJOY the first MARTYR to American LIBERTY. MURDERED for asserting the FREEDOM of the PRESS. Alton Nov. 7, 1837"¹⁶⁹ The Society's declaration linked Lovejoy to the Freedom of the Press and thereby republicanism. Despite a few dissenting voices, the abolitionists, which included Leavitt, Wright, and Wendell Phillips, supported the Society's declaration.

William Lloyd Garrison had more reservations than his contemporaries. He mourned Lovejoy's death despite previous differences between the two. Garrison's first editorial in the *Liberator* following the murder stated:

The amiable, benevolent, intrepid LOVEJOY is no more! In his martyrdom he died as the representative of Philosophy, Justice, Liberty, and Christianity; well therefore, may his fall agitate all heaven and earth! That his loss will be of incalculable gain to the noble cause which was so precious in his soul, is certain.¹⁷⁰

Aside from Garrison's grievances, he condemned Lovejoy's use of firearms. Garrison was a strict pacifist; he suggested that Lovejoy might have lived if he had placed his trust in God, rather than taking up weapons. His personal letters are less celebratory than his public statements, and regret the fact that Lovejoy may have been a murderer before a victim.¹⁷¹ Garrison, however, as much as he disagreed with violence, supported Lovejoy's right to guard his press. The civil authority—the mayor—had authorized

¹⁶⁷ William Channing quoted in: Smith, 251.

¹⁶⁸ Memoir, 323.

¹⁶⁹ Merton L. Dillon, *Elijah P. Lovejoy, Abolitionist Editor* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1961), 177.

¹⁷⁰ Garrison, *William Lloyd Garrison 1805-1879 The Story of His Life Told by His Children* (New York: The Century Co., 1885), 2: 190.

¹⁷¹ Following the death of Lovejoy, it was rumored that he had been the one who had fired first at the mob fatally wounding Lyman Bishop. While this is most likely not the case, it still has not been proven otherwise beyond any doubt.

Lovejoy's warehouse stance. Garrison saw Lovejoy's stance as legitimate under the laws and Constitution of the country. In the end, Garrison could not ignore the opportunity to publicly defend Lovejoy despite their personal differences. He respected Lovejoy's allegiance to the freedom of the press and realized that Lovejoy had fought to uphold republican ideals.

Abolitionists Sarah and Angelina Grimké also privately lamented over Lovejoy's decision to arm himself. The Grimké Sisters, however, were much less forgiving than Garrison in their personal letters.¹⁷² They wrote, in a letter to Theodore Dwight Weld, "I read with sorrow the resolutions of the A.A.S.S., not even a regret expressed that violence had been resorted to."¹⁷³ The Grimkés feared that the great moral cause of abolition had taken a turn for the worst. They continued to write that, "the death of brother L. has given a deadly wound to abolition as a Christian enterprise; it is an hour of darkness and gloominess to me."¹⁷⁴ The Grimkés refused to sanction violence of any means, although they too acknowledged that the mayor had sanctioned Lovejoy's defense. The Grimkés and Garrison did not represent the more popular view.¹⁷⁵

The news of Lovejoy's death quickly spread throughout the nation. The myth impressed Americans in innumerable ways. They saw him as the American hero for which they had been longing. One of those Americans was Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerson was a long time advocate of free speech, high morals, temperance, and other republican values but had yet to publicly attack slavery. His failure to support the anti-slavery cause

¹⁷² The Grimkés, like Garrison, were absolute pacifists, believing only in the authority of God.

¹⁷³ Sarah and Angelina in a letter to Weld dated Nov. 30, 1837 found in: Gilbert H. Barnes, and Dwight L. Dumond, eds., Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld, Angelina Grimké Weld, and Sarah Grimké 1822-1844 (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1965), 485

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 485-486.

¹⁷⁵ The direction of the Anti-Slavery cause headed in two different directions from this point; one believing in pacifism and the other remaining a bit more pragmatic. Lovejoy, himself, had straddled the fence between violence and non-violence. Leavitt in the A.A.S.S., and Garrison eventually divided over this issue. Fortunately for Lovejoy and his ensuing myth, the group lamenting his actions were in the minority. Frederick Douglass, the greatest abolitionist and black leader of the nineteenth century also separated from Garrison's faction along similar lines.

by the time of Lovejoy's murder left him guilt-stricken. In late November, Emerson wrote in his journal:

The brave Lovejoy has given his breast to the bullet for his part and has died when it was better not to live. He is absolved. There are always men enough ready to die for the silliest punctilio; to die like dogs who fall down under each other's teeth, but I sternly rejoice, that one was found to die for humanity & the rights of free speech & opinion.¹⁷⁶

Emerson, shortly thereafter, decided to join the anti-slavery cause; he could not bear the guilt of remaining silent while others, like Lovejoy, willingly sacrificed their life. Lovejoy had provided a link between abolition and the free press, and thereby gave abolition a new found respect. Emerson could no longer avoid taking a stance. Len Gougeon, biographer of Emerson, writes: "After describing Lovejoy in his journal as an authentic hero...., [Emerson] decided to take a public stand."¹⁷⁷ Emerson gave his first of many antislavery lectures near the end of that November in the vestry of the Second Church in Concord.

Emerson lectured on *Heroism* at the Masonic Temple in Boston two months later on January 24, 1838. The lecture revealed Emerson's belief that individuals should place the community above themselves, and his respect for self-sacrifice. Emerson's thoughts were surely on Lovejoy as he spoke:

Our culture, therefore, must not omit the arming of the man. Let him hear in season, that he is born into the state of war, and that the commonwealth and his own well-being, require that he should not go dancing in the weeds of peace, but warned, self-collected, and neither defying nor dreading the thunder, let him take both reputation and life in his hand, and with perfect urbanity, dare the gibbet and the mob by the absolute truth of his speech, and the rectitude of his behavior.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ Merton M. Sealts, Jr., ed., The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1965), 5:437

¹⁷⁷ Len Gougeon and Joel Myerson, eds., Emerson's Antislavery Writings (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), xvi.

¹⁷⁸ Stephen E. Whicher, ed. The Early Lectures of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1964), 2: 330.

Emerson drove his point home about the importance of self-sacrifice, virtue, and liberty: "Human virtue demands her champions and martyrs, and the trial of persecution always proceeds."¹⁷⁹ He then venerated Lovejoy in words which echoed his journal entry. Emerson felt a connection to Lovejoy because of the strong republican values they shared.

Beyond the press, Lovejoy's death and the Alton riots prompted meetings and discussions throughout the nation. The country responded to the events in Alton with anxiety and fear. Citizens filled town halls and churches as if the fate of the nation rested upon their immediate actions. Would mob rule be allowed to continually undermine the authority of the Constitution? Would freedom of speech be lost forever? These questions, along with the debate over slavery, had taken on new significance in light of the events which had transpired over the past few years; a mob attacked Garrison and his press in 1835, the House of Representatives adopted the anti-abolitionist "gag rule" in 1836¹⁸⁰, and another mob burned the Ursuline Convent in Charlestown, Mass. in 1834. It appeared that the nation was slipping further and further away from sound republican values; mobs who attempted to limit free speech were the antithesis of republican virtue and democracy. Meetings around the nation inspired citizens to react against the rising forces of mobs and slavery.

Citizens concerned with the attack on liberty decided to hold one such meeting in Boston. Dr. William Ellery Channing, an anti-slavery evangelist, organized a meeting in Faneuil Hall on Dec. 8, 1837 with the intent of discussing Lovejoy's death. People packed the hall on the designated evening; Channing's introductory speech protested against all forms of violence, particularly mob violence. The Hon. James Trecothick Austin, Attorney General of the Massachusetts Commonwealth, rose to speak after a few brief speeches. He attacked and criticized Lovejoy's conduct; a position which differed from the previous remarks. Austin attempted to validate and defend the Alton mob by comparing them to the "founding fathers" and the Boston Tea Party. He believed the mob had rightfully

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 338

¹⁸⁰ This rule automatically tabled any abolitionist petitions, to be indefinitely ignored.

persecuted Lovejoy, who had "died as the fool dieth." The crowd grew restless and disturbed while Austin made his bold assertions. No one in the audience sat more stunned and dismayed than Wendell Phillips, a practicing lawyer and orator. He despised nothing more than disorder and mob violence, much the same as Lovejoy did. Friends urged Phillips to reply, although he was unprepared to speak. After pushing his way through the crowd, he obtained a spot at the podium and stood ready to respond to Austin, who had put the crowd into a frenzy.

Wendell Phillips was born in Boston into an upper-class family and received his education from Harvard. It was here, "he had discovered a way to express his deep attachment to the republican political values of individual liberty and social order...and his unremitting hostility to unregulated power, to 'artificial' hierarchy, and to every evidence of unchecked passion in society."¹⁸¹ Phillips struggled as a lawyer after school, but more importantly felt ill at ease about his position in society. He found himself increasingly amongst abolitionists, one such being his future wife Ann Greene, and further away from his upper-class roots. "Nevertheless," writes Stewart, "his classmates would still have recognized him as the 'first' Wendell Phillips, the Harvard conservative."¹⁸² Lovejoy's murder would permanently change his life.

Phillips expected the Faneuil Hall meeting to condemn all violence and defend the free press and republican institutions of America. The speech of Austin, a man of civil authority himself, shocked Phillips who spoke to dispel the views Austin had put forth:

A comparison has been drawn between the events of the Revolution and the tragedy at Alton. We have heard it asserted here, in Faneuil Hall, that Great Britain had a right to tax the Colonies, and we have heard the mob at Alton, the drunken murderers of Lovejoy, compared to those patriot fathers who threw the tea overboard.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ James Brewer Stewart, Wendell Phillips: Liberty's Hero (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 58. Stewart Also provides a great description of the events at Faneuil Hall.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 58.

¹⁸³ Bernard Smith, ed., The Democratic Spirit: A Collection of American Writings from the Earliest Times to the Present Day (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1941), 383.

Phillips argued that Constitutional rights protected Lovejoy's right to defend the press and described Lovejoy and his allies as, "the police of the city resisting rioters,—civil government breasting itself to the shock of lawless men."¹⁸⁴ Lovejoy was not just protecting his press, but freedom and liberty throughout the country. Phillips also turned the mob into an evil band of "drunken murderers." He took control of the crowd which Austin had set in disarray and his brilliant speech ended the meeting as no one wished to nor could follow such a stirring performance.

Phillips rejuvenated his own struggling career shortly after his speech at Faneuil Hall. He closed his law firm in 1838 and dedicated his life to abolition. Stewart writes that, "for Phillips, republican axioms were to prove most adaptable to a crusade against slavery."¹⁸⁵ Phillips also became a staunch advocate for several women's rights, temperance, labor unions, Indian justice, and economic and social equality. Reflecting upon his own reputable career, Phillips, who had only known of Lovejoy through the press, later wrote: "The gun which was aimed at the breast of Lovejoy brought me to my feet. I can never forget the agony of that moment."¹⁸⁶ While Phillips revered Lovejoy, his own allusion to Lovejoy's republican virtue reinforced the myth and further stimulated the myth making process. He had helped turn Lovejoy into a secular hero, by ignoring his religious motivations. Phillips remained an asset to the cause of abolition, the cause of liberty, and many other reforms throughout his life.

Meetings similar to the one held at Faneuil Hall occurred in the West as well. One of the earliest and most memorable of these meetings took place in Hudson, Ohio. In November of 1837, Laurens P. Hickok, Professor of Theology at Western Reserve College, excitedly assembled students and faculty to inform them of Lovejoy's murder. He planned to hold an additional meeting a few days later. During the next gathering, Hickok aggressively raised the questions which troubled the nation: "The crisis has come.

¹⁸⁴ Smith, ed., 386.

¹⁸⁵ Stewart, 31.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 58.

The question now before the American citizens is no longer alone, 'Can the slaves be made free?' but, 'Are we free or are we slaves under Southern mob law?'"¹⁸⁷ Hickok demanded freedom for the slave and freedom for the nation. He stressed the importance of Constitutional law and its triumph over "mobism." He ended his passionate speech with a call to reestablish the press in Alton; he volunteered himself as editor if no one else would step forth. Several other individuals gave speeches and presented resolutions which the assembled group readily passed. The most significant resolutions called for upholding the law and denouncing slavery.¹⁸⁸

A thirty seven year old man sitting towards the back of the church, whose tanning business had failed during the financial panic, had been listening intently throughout the evening. He arose just before the close of the meeting and proclaimed: "Here, before God, in the presence of these witnesses, from this time, I consecrate my life to the destruction of slavery!"¹⁸⁹ The young man's name was John Brown. John Brown's father, Owen, closed the meeting at Hudson with a fervent prayer. The image of Lovejoy created at that meeting animated John Brown throughout his life. Brown saw Lovejoy as someone who had died for the liberty of the slave. He was now prepared to free the slaves at such a cost. Brown, like Phillips, had never known Lovejoy except as a martyr to anti-slavery and the free press; they never had to respond to Lovejoy's anti-Catholic or anti-immigration positions. Lovejoy's myth gave them courage and determination.

In 1851, John Brown reacted to the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, which gave slave catchers new power in the free states.¹⁹⁰ He formed a Springfield, IL branch of the United States League of Gileadites with the intent of bonding African-Americans together to resist the slave catchers. Brown wrote to the blacks, "think of the number who have been

¹⁸⁷ J. Newton Brown, "The Beginning of John Brown's Career," *The Nation*, XCVIII, No. 2537 (1914): 157. Also in Smith, 234.

¹⁸⁸ It was not atypical from other meetings held around the country during this period. The passing of resolutions suggests that state and national governments did not hold much power on the western frontier as people were much more self-governed. Thus the issue of mobocracy concerned many law abiding citizens.

¹⁸⁹ Brown, 157. Also in Smith, 234.

¹⁹⁰ Louis Filler, *Crusade Against Slavery* (Michigan: Reference Publications, Inc., 1986), 241.

mobbed and imprisoned upon your account. Have any of you seen the Branded hand? Do you remember the names of Lovejoy and Torrey?"¹⁹¹ Lovejoy's name provided a call to arms and served as inspiration. Brown revered his act of self sacrifice and told the Gileadites that, "nothing so charms the American people as personal bravery."¹⁹² The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 further frustrated John Brown, who had had little success in his life.¹⁹³ Fearing that Kansas would become a slave state, Brown decided to take action on May 24, 1856. In Kansas, Brown, his three sons, and three others viciously murdered five pro-slavery settlers in their sleep, none of whom actually owned a slave. Brown miraculously escaped punishment. He made his famed stance three years later at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, where he had intended to seize the federal armory, round-up support from blacks, and begin a series of slave insurrections throughout the state—and perhaps the country. The state suppressed his feeble attempt in October of 1859 with little difficulty and eventually persecuted Brown for his endeavors. However Brown's impact had been made. He, like Lovejoy, died a martyr.¹⁹⁴

Lacey Baldwin Smith writes: "Undeniably, martyrs rarely appear singly. They are usually a group phenomenon, taking strength from their sense of collective identity and representing, in their defiance and denial of the existing order and judicial code, serious rifts within society."¹⁹⁵ Lovejoy and Brown were associated with the abolition movement and freedom for the slaves, they both turned to religion and God, and their deaths heightened tensions arising over the slavery issue. Smith continues: "Unbalanced and unstable societies experiencing a process of cultural, economic, and political restructuring obviously generate martyrs."¹⁹⁶ The nation grappled with many social and economic tensions prior to the Civil War. The riots at Alton and John Brown's raid were precursors

¹⁹¹ Oswald Garrison Villard, John Brown 1800-1859: A Biography Fifty Years After (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1910), 51.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ The Kansas-Nebraska Act overruled the Missouri Compromise by allowing western territories to decide for themselves whether to enter the Union as free or slave states.

¹⁹⁴ Smith provides a great summary of Brown's life in his Fools, Martyrs, Traitors.

¹⁹⁵ Smith, 18.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

to the Civil War. Lovejoy and Brown both fell to the major social force generating this strife, slavery.

Lovejoy and Brown, however, were radically different. Lovejoy respected the law and appealed to it whereas John Brown willingly committed treason. Lovejoy feared slave insurrections, and most likely would have despised Brown's radical plans. Lovejoy believed emancipation could only be successful if the masters willingly freed their slaves. In his editorial entitled *What are the Doctrines of Anti-Slavery Men?* from July 21, 1837, Lovejoy wrote that, "emancipation, to be of any value to the slave, must be the free, voluntary act of the master, performed from a conviction of its propriety."¹⁹⁷ Brown's raid at Harpers Ferry and his ruthless murders in Kansas conflict with Lovejoy's creed, who was a pacifist until a month before his murder. And even then, he had secured the consent of the civil authority. Furthermore, Brown probably would not have embraced Lovejoy with such enthusiasm if he had known some of Lovejoy's earlier beliefs towards the African-American race.¹⁹⁸ Brown's understanding of Lovejoy, due to the myth making process, had strengthened his desire to take radical action. In turn, Brown's actions helped shape Lovejoy's myth into one of a radical abolitionist. Both Lovejoy and Brown were products of the myth making process. In life they were very different; in American mythology they blended together as republican heroes who had fought for the liberty of the slave.¹⁹⁹

Elijah Parish Lovejoy's myth had far reaching implications. Lovejoy had a major influence the Beecher family, all of whom battled against slavery. The Reverend Edward Beecher, Lovejoy's close friend and President of Illinois College, was close to his sister,

¹⁹⁷ Memoir, 238.

¹⁹⁸ "Missouri will not, perhaps, lead but she will assuredly follow Kentucky,..., in the glorious achievements of freeing the great West from the stain and curse of slavery, and a black population," from *St. Louis Observer*, 30 Oct. 1834, 2.

¹⁹⁹ Princeton Professor of Philosophy Cornel West, in his *Race Matters* from 1994, writes, "This white supremacist venture was, in the end, a relative failure—thanks to the courage and creativity of millions of black people and hundreds of exceptional white folk like John Brown, Elijah Lovejoy, Myles Horton, Russell Banks, Anne Braden, and others." Cornel West, *Race Matters* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 123.

Harriet Beecher (Stowe). Harriet, who lived in Cincinnati at the time of Lovejoy's death, had often heard horror stories associated with slavery. News of the riots at Alton brought the shocking rumor that the mob had taken her brother Edward's life in addition to Lovejoy's. (Edward Beecher had actually left town the night before the murder, believing the press had been secured.) Milton Rugoff, biographer of the Beecher family, describes the tragedy in Alton as a poignant moment in Harriet Beecher's life:

And for one heart-chilling moment—before word came that Edward had left Alton just before the attack—the monster that was slavery seemed to have struck the Beechers themselves. It had certainly come close. And it was the kind of incident that, more than any argument, would light a flame of anger in Harriet Beecher Stowe's heart.²⁰⁰

The young Harriet would not take action for nearly another twenty-five years.

In 1850, while Congress considered the Fugitive Slave Act, Harriet Beecher Stowe visited her brother Edward and his wife Isabella in Boston. "True to the memory of their martyred friend Elijah Lovejoy," the Beechers spoke harshly of the proposed bill.²⁰¹ Congress unfortunately passed the Act only a few months later as part of the Compromise of 1850. Isabella soon after wrote a letter to Harriet stating, "Hattie, if I could use a pen as you *can*, I would write something that will make this whole nation feel what an accursed thing slavery is."²⁰² Harriet read the letter, stood up, and declared, "I *will* write something. I will if I live."²⁰³ Harriet Beecher Stowe, true to her words, went to work on creating her first major publication, Uncle Tom's Cabin. The first installment of the novel appeared on the front page of the *National Era* on June 5, 1851, less than one year after Isabella's letter. The book in its entirety shocked the nation with horrifying tales of slavery.

²⁰⁰ Milton Rugoff, The Beechers: An American Family in the Nineteenth Century (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 233.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 318.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 319.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 319.

Lovejoy's murder affected no one more than his brother, Owen Lovejoy. Owen left Albion, Maine in 1836 and headed west to help his brother with the printing press. Although absent the night of the riots, he found his brother lying dead in the warehouse the following morning. On the day of Lovejoy's funeral, Owen leaned over his brother's body and vowed, "I shall never forsake the cause that has been sprinkled with my brother's blood."²⁰⁴ Owen Lovejoy soon became a popular abolitionist speaker and political figure in Illinois, due in no small part to his brother's fame. The *Western Citizen* wrote in 1846: "When Owen Lovejoy shall fill a seat in Congress by the votes of the people of Illinois, then let it be said that Illinois has repented."²⁰⁵ The people elected him as a Republican to the 35th Congress in 1856. Owen fought relentlessly for the rights of slaves and African-Americans throughout his tenure; he became one of the staunchest abolitionist to ever hold a seat in Congress. He, too, had seemingly forgotten about his brother's evangelicalism, anti-Catholicism, and anti-immigration sentiments. Owen linked republican virtue with abolition when he frequently faced Congressional slave owners with words such as: "I will not give up the Declaration of Independence which comes to us baptized in the blood of the purest patriots that ever lived, because there is a miserable prejudice against the colored man."²⁰⁶ He continually frustrated Congress with his persistence and became a close adviser to President Abraham Lincoln during the 1860s. Owen fell to Bright's disease on March 25, 1864, before he could see his dream of emancipation fulfilled.

Owen's greatest tribute to Lovejoy was his Memoir of the Rev. Elijah P. Lovejoy: Who Was Murdered in Defense of the Liberty of the Press, at Alton, Illinois, Nov. 7, 1837, which he put together with his brother, Joseph C., in 1838. The ex-President John Quincy Adams wrote the introduction to the book, in which he hailed the creation of the American Republic as one of the greatest Christian accomplishments. Adams saw the institution of slavery as being adverse to Christianity and indicative of tyrannical and

²⁰⁴ Edward Magdol, Owen Lovejoy: Abolitionist in Congress (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1967), 24.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 167.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 257.

oppressive governments. He wrote of Lovejoy, "that an American citizen, in a state whose Constitution repudiates all Slavery, should die a martyr in defense of the freedom of the press, is a phenomenon in the history of this Union."²⁰⁷ He championed Lovejoy for his republican ideals and finished his compelling introduction by calling Lovejoy, "the first American Martyr to THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS AND THE FREEDOM OF THE SLAVE." This is how the nation would remember Lovejoy.

Lovejoy's name inspired many prominent figures in the years between his death and the end of the Civil War. "Lovejoy, a noble martyr, in defense of a free press and a free gospel," spoke Frederick Douglass in 1855, "weltered in his warm blood at Alton. A brother of his, as true an Abolitionist, is now a member of the Legislature of the state, which received this bloody baptism."²⁰⁸ These influential characters played in an integral role in the development of Lovejoy's myth. They embraced the republicanism which Lovejoy symbolized. The Union's victory in 1865 brought an end to the debate over slavery and an end to one era of American history. It also ensured Lovejoy a permanent place in United States history. Lovejoy's myth would take on new meaning and significance after 1865.

²⁰⁷ Memoir, 12.

²⁰⁸ Frederick Douglass, The Anti-Slavery Movement: An Address Delivered in Rochester, New York, on 19 March 1855, appearing in John W. Blassingame, ed., The Frederick Douglass Papers. Series One: Speeches, Debates and Interviews Volume 3: 1855-63 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 31.

Myth, America, and Lovejoy

The nation went through significant changes in the years following the Civil War. The North's victory ensured the survival of the Union and the destruction of slavery. Prior to the war, there had been little assurance that the Constitution would survive, that democracy would not fail, or that America would not crumble from internal pressures. The outcome of the Civil War proved to the world that democracy was successful; the Republic had survived its greatest conflict. The people of United States could now focus on improving America as a whole and creating a united nation. Regional differences became subordinate to national goals; what was good for the South became good for the North and what was good for the East became good for the West. Arthur Meier Schlesinger suggests that, "the overthrow of the Confederacy in 1865 had not only insured the geographic unity of the country, but it had also strengthened the sense of national consciousness."²⁰⁹ People began to work for the common good of the nation for the first time since the Revolution. (This is not to say that the nation was free of resentment and animosities.) This new nationalistic attitude played a central role in the development of myths.

James Oliver Robertson writes: "The nation and its destiny, its independence and its expansion, its mission to the world were challenged and tested in the Civil War. And out of that war came many of the fundamental myths which have supported and directed American nationalism since."²¹⁰ Myths helped to create a national sense of identity. A common national past bound Americans together in one country and helped to overcome regional differences; myths of the founding fathers and their heroics seemed more potent than ever before. Regional heroes quickly became national heroes. William McNeill argues that, "consciousness of a common past, after all, is a powerful supplement to other

²⁰⁹ Arthur Meier Schlesinger, Political and Social Growth of the American People 1865-1940, 3d ed. (New York: Macmillan Company, 1941), 244.

²¹⁰ Robertson, 86.

ways of defining who 'we' are."²¹¹ National myths revere the qualities that are supposedly inherent in all Americans, a love for liberty, virtue, and independence. The tale of George Washington and the cherry tree celebrates these characteristics. Americans accept this tale as part of their national heritage and take pride in the fact that, they too, may possess those same attributes.

Myths also serve a more practical purpose; they teach lessons. The simple message of George Washington and the cherry tree is not to tell a lie. However, myths often have connotations that extend far beyond a simple moral lesson. They provide precedents for people who find themselves in predicaments; a country without national myths invariably does not know how to act in crisis situations. McNeill explains that, "a nation or any other human group that knows how to behave in crisis situations because it has inherited a heroic historiographical tradition that tells ancestors resisted their enemies successfully is more likely to act together effectively than a group lacking such a tradition."²¹² These national myths, whether they are true or not, provide people with courage. Carl Becker insists that the founding fathers, "were able to act the part of virtuous republicans much more effectively because they carried around in their heads an idea, or ideal if you prefer, of Greek republicanism and Roman virtue."²¹³ Elijah Lovejoy was prepared to sacrifice his life and play the part of a virtuous republican because he invariably knew the stories of the founding fathers. John Brown acted the part of a martyr because of his heroic image of Lovejoy. These were people who were prepared to sacrifice their lives for the nation. Myths thus regenerate themselves. The retelling of these stories will hopefully inspire others to act as bravely as their predecessors.

Popular myths of founding fathers and other legends had started to take on new significance before the end of the Civil War. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's mythic

²¹¹ William H. McNeill, Mythistory and Other Essays (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 11.

²¹² McNeill, 13-14.

²¹³ Phil L. Snyder, ed., Detachment and the Writing of History: Essays and Letters of Carl L. Becker (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1958), 58.

poem of Paul Revere in 1861, *Paul Revere's Ride*, helped transform the "midnight rider" from a local hero into a national hero. His rendition of the famous night has become popular in schools across America. Children continue to memorize these lines today:

Listen my children, and you shall hear,
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere
On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-five;
Hardly a man is now alive
Who remembers that famous day and year²¹⁴

The poem leaves Americans with a sense of pride. Longfellow dramatizes Revere's heroics and captures the essence of self-sacrifice. He writes: "The fate of the nation was riding that night."²¹⁵ Longfellow depicts Revere as a brave republican hero who had risked his life to save the country. He also celebrates the courage of the virtuous republican farmer and presents the British as cowards: "You know the rest. In the books you have read, How the British Regulars fled,— How the farmers gave them ball for ball....And only pausing to fire and load."²¹⁶ The poem, although full of inaccuracies, survived generation after generation and created Paul Revere's immortal image. The North's victory in the war undoubtedly aided the spread of his myth.

However, the traditional myths which espoused republicanism changed following the Civil War; new elements were added and while others were taken away. In other words, myths changed to coincide with the new values of the society. Carl Becker suggests that as much as the present is a product of the past, the past is a product of the present. "We build our conceptions of history partly out of our present needs and purposes. The past is a kind of screen upon which we project our vision of the future; and indeed it is a moving picture, borrowing much of its form and color from our fears and

²¹⁴ David Hackett Fischer, *Paul Revere's Ride* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 331

²¹⁵ Henry Seidel Canby, *Favorite Poems of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1947), 45.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 46.

aspirations."²¹⁷ Americans espoused a new type of character in the late nineteenth century.

It was an age of the self-made man, industrialization, and power. Americans looked to real life figures like Andrew Carnegie, who had worked their way to riches from poverty. They read the fictional tales of Horatio Alger; his stories glorified "underdogs" who rose to success in a harsh, industrialized world. Robertson writes that, "the stories of the new heroes, the new models for the individual pursuit of happiness, included elements of that modern industrial world which helped transform the older myths."²¹⁸ Americans wanted to feel they could achieve endless heights of glory. As the individual, now governed by new impersonal forces, actually became less and less of a force in the late nineteenth century, the image of the solitary hero became more popular. David Hackett Fisher writes: "From Captain John Smith to Colonel Charles Lindbergh, many American heroes have been remembered in that way, as solitary actors against the world."²¹⁹ Longfellow failed to even mention Revere's partner, William Dawes. Americans would begin to portray Lovejoy in a similar fashion, as a man against a multitude, and soon forget about his worthy companions.

After the nation had struggled to reunite during "Reconstruction" between 1865 and 1877, it focused its energies on expansion and nationalism. The newly united America shifted from an isolationist policy to one of imperialism. Now a successful democracy, it strove to become a world superpower; America ranked third in the world as a sea power by 1900.²²⁰ Myths told Americans how great they were and that America was destined to become a world leader. The end of slavery and shift to industry allowed Americans to more aggressively pursue economic enterprise. "Meanwhile," writes Schlesinger, "the Economic Revolution, by knitting the country together with bonds of steel and ties of mutual business interest, caused men to disregard state boundaries and think in terms of the

²¹⁷ Snyder, ed., 59.

²¹⁸ Robertson, 163.

²¹⁹ Fischer, 332.

²²⁰ Schlesinger, 258.

nation as a whole."²²¹ Standardization, of both industry and parts, allowed Americans to unite further. It made the development of railways possible, which connected the East coast to the West coast and the North to the South. Railway construction exploded after the Civil War and linked the country together, symbolically as well as physically. Industry and capitalism had never been so powerful.²²²

Standardization did not just apply to industry; it influenced all aspects of American life, including education. Education was steeped in regionalism during the first half of the nineteenth century. The children of the North received an education far different from those in the South and the children of the frontier received even little to no formal education. A nationalized school system united people from substantially different backgrounds. Schools became tax supported in 1860 and, "by 1880," writes historian Bessie Louise Pierce, "legal and legislative objections to the establishment of high schools had succumbed to the conviction that education was essential in the new social and industrial order."²²³ The number of free public high schools increased from five hundred in 1870 to six thousand in 1900.²²⁴ Public schools taught children how to be good Americans; regional divisions had previously prevented this type of national education. Pierce, in her Public Opinion and The Teaching of United States History, writes: "Those subjects in the curriculum tending to promote patriotism and good citizenship received the sanction of the educator."²²⁵ History, thereby, took on more and more importance and mythic images of the past certainly influenced education. The rapidly increasing number of immigrants to the United States further encouraged the teaching of history. Schlesinger suggests that, "it was the democratic school system that brought the influences of the new

²²¹ Schlesinger, 244.

²²² Schlesinger has several sections on the development of the railroad and the development of industry.

²²³ Bessie Louise Pierce, Public Opinion and The Teaching of History in the United States (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926), 13.

²²⁴ Schlesinger, 195.

²²⁵ Pierce, 13.

land into the immigrant home." Immigrants and their children would soon, "accept American ways and ideals so zealously as wholly to forget their alien cultural heritage."²²⁶

The study of history had earned enough support following the Civil War to become widely accepted by the 1880s. The American Historical Association was founded in 1884 and incorporated five years later by Congress.²²⁷ The Association aspired to create a national history, one in which all Americans could take pride. Historians used myths to illustrate a common, thematical past. However, white males were the only Americans who could take pride in this new nationalized past. William H. McNeill, in discussing mythistory, writes:

Thus, the founding fathers of the American Historical Association and their immediate successors were intent on facilitating the consolidation of a new American nation by writing history in a WASPish mold, while also claiming affiliation with a tradition of Western civilization that ran back through modern and medieval Europe to the ancient Greeks and Hebrews.²²⁸

The historians of the era, thereby, left out huge parts of history in order to capture the virtue of Americans, or the inevitability of America's greatness. McNeill describes the history of the United States as often adopting the "good guy" versus the "bad guy" scenario. The characters of the past were simply divided into one of the two categories. Those who represented virtue, morality, self-sacrifice, and temperance were placed into the "good-guy" category while those who symbolized corrupted power, lack of civilization, and moral ineptitude were the "bad-guys." Longfellow's poem faces the virtuous farmers against the evil British soldiers. "The result is mythical," writes McNeill, "the past as we want it to be, safely simplified into a contest between good guys and bad guys, 'us' and 'them.'"²²⁹ The myth of Lovejoy, which had been insured in the years leading up to the

²²⁶ Schlesinger, 255.

²²⁷ <http://chnm.gmu.edu/aha/info/intro.html>

²²⁸ McNeill, 10.

²²⁹ Ibid., 13.

Civil War, would become part of this American story. Lovejoy, the lone editor who fought to preserve freedom of speech, became the "good guy" and the drunken mob turned into the un-American "bad guys." In reality, the story was not so simple.

Scholars and historians began to rewrite the history of the United States in this "good-guy" versus "bad-guy" manner. James Schouler's History of the United States of America Under the Constitution, published in 1880, consisted of eight volumes which traced the years between 1783 and 1877. Although Schouler intended to avoid "'sonorous metal' or martial pomp,"²³⁰ as he states in his introduction, his writing style and text suggest a different message. Schouler, whether intentionally or not, adopted the "good guy" versus the "bad guy" scenario. His description of Lovejoy and Alton is far from accurate: "Alton, Illinois, that little savage of a remote western town, reeked with the blood of our first anti-slavery martyr, who was murdered for emulating Garrison's press."²³¹ The mob actually consisted of several respectable citizens, and Lovejoy had initially praised Alton for its good Christian character. Lovejoy, furthermore, did not try to emulate Garrison's press but had described him as a, "foul-mouthed fellow."²³² Schouler continues: "His exasperated enemies soon applied the torch to the building; they were fired upon by the defenders, and Lovejoy then stepping out to the door, perhaps to pacify or explain, fell pierced with five balls expiring almost immediately."²³³ Although no one truly knows what happened on the night of November 7, 1837, most first-hand accounts reveal that Lovejoy held a gun and intended to fire. He certainly was not stepping out to "pacify" given his determined stance. Schouler absolves him of this crime and creates a figure more susceptible to martyrdom. Schouler's brief story of Lovejoy paints a fond, but inaccurate, picture.

²³⁰ James Schouler, History of the United States of America Under the Constitution Vol. 1 (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1880), vi.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, 299.

²³² Simon, 30.

²³³ Schouler, Vol. 4, 299.

The 100th year anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, added to the national pride of the late nineteenth century. Americans had much to celebrate during this period; democracy had survived a century, industry was booming, and America was fast becoming a world superpower. Schlesinger writes:

As the republic reached the centenary of its birth, the heightened pride of nationality exulted in a series of patriotic celebrations, beginning with the anniversary of Concord and Lexington in 1875 and the Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia in 1876, and continuing year after year until the setting up of the Supreme Court was commemorate in 1890 with due acclaim.²³⁴

Andrew Carnegie celebrated the times in 1886 with his book entitled Triumphant Democracy. He spoke highly of a people who had the ability to govern themselves.²³⁵

The Centennial year of 1876 included unprecedented celebrations of American democracy and liberty. Documents such as the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution took on new significance. Robertson suggests that, "the myth of the birth of the nation provides the structure through which Americans understand their history."²³⁶ Historians de-emphasized the years before the Revolution and reintrepreted 1776 as the beginning of American history. The Centennial celebration reglorified legends and myths of American heroes and provided Americans with a greater sense of national pride. Americans began to remember their heros with monuments and statues; the city of Boston honor Paul Revere with an equestrian monument in 1885.²³⁷

The state of Illinois decided to erect a permanent monument in Alton which would recognize and celebrate Elijah Parish Lovejoy. Citizens conceived of the idea in 1867, but lack of funds and iniative prevented immediate action. The project was revived in 1885 under the name of the Monument Association, which received a certificate of Incorporation

²³⁴ Schlesinger, 245.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Robertson, 54.

²³⁷ Fischer, 334.

in 1886. After falling short of funds for a second time, the Association renewed the project with success in 1894. The State Senate allocated \$25,000 to the project, and citizens raised an additional \$5,000. The project began in 1896 under the guidance of designer Robert P. Bringham and architect Louis Mulgurd. ²³⁸

Today the monument stands as one of the tallest and grandest monuments ever constructed to honor an individual. It consists of a ninety-three foot high granite column topped with a seventeen foot high bronze statue of the winged goddess of victory, Vie. The column has three sections weighing sixteen to eighteen tons each, and the statue adds an additional 8, 700 pounds. The monument stands upon an elevated circular granite terrace, forty feet in diameter. Two thirty foot high granite sentinel columns, topped with bronze eagles stand, on the sides of the terrace. "The sculptor's intent in the design was to convey the feeling of ultimate triumph of the cause for which it was erected. The winged victory crowning the main shaft and the eagles mounted on each side express an idea of victory finally achieved." ²³⁹ Four bronze plaques decorate the base of the column.

Each plaque conveys a different message which holds certain connotations for Lovejoy's myth. The front plaque is decorated by a medallion of Lovejoy above the words "A Martyr to Liberty." A quote by Lovejoy under the medallion reads, "I have sworn eternal opposition to slavery, and by the blessing of God, I will never go back." The back plaque, entitled "Champion of Free Speech," has an engraving of a press and a statement by Lovejoy in which he asserts his right to speak, publish, and write whatever he desires. Both quotes help to identify Lovejoy as a true American hero, who defended liberty, and the freedom of speech. A side plaque has the quote: "If the laws of my country fail to protect me I appeal to God, and with him I cheerfully rest my cause. I can die at my post but I cannot desert it." ²⁴⁰ Lovejoy's prophetic statement ironically appeared in the *Observer* of Nov. 5, 1835, six months before he left St. Louis for Alton. The last plaque

²³⁸ Charlene Cannon, presented in the Madison County Historical Society Fall Meeting of Oct. 4, 1987. Found in Lovejoy Collection, Miller Library, Waterville, ME. (Lovejoy 8 A4)

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ St. Louis Observer, 5 Nov. 1835.

celebrates the other defenders of the press who, according to the plaque, "made the first armed resistance to the aggressions of the slave power in America."²⁴¹ Joseph and Owen Lovejoy, in the Memoir describe all the defenders, "not as Abolitionists but as citizens."²⁴² Clearly they were citizens protecting Lovejoy's property and not defending the institution of slavery. The plaques convey what Americans want to see and read. It is not the actual history that concerns people, but rather the myth. Americans come to the monument to celebrate and take pride in their past.

The column itself is representative of republican and democratic ideals. Robert Mill's design for the Washington Monument in Baltimore most likely set the precedent for the Lovejoy Monument. Mill's column, completed in 1829, was the first major civic monument in the United States. Mill's monument was, "inspired by the Nelson Column in London, the Vendôme Column in Paris, and ultimately by Trajan's Column in Rome."²⁴³ The Romans used the column, as well as the arch, to mark great moments or events. Americans of the early nineteenth century embraced Greek and Roman architectural forms to promote democratic and republican ideals. The buildings of Washington D.C., civic buildings, Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, and national monuments reflect this fact. Whether or not the United States truly reflects these ancient cultures is not pertinent; we aspire to their ideals by connecting ourselves to their forms. Lovejoy's monument, thus, stands as an appropriate marker for someone who defended democratic and republican notions. His myth teaches that he fought to uphold freedom of speech and the liberty of man.²⁴⁴

²⁴¹ The descriptions of the plaque and quotes are found in Dedication of the Lovejoy Monument, Alton, Illinois, November 8th, 1897 (Alton, Ill: Chas Holden, Printer, 1897), 29.

²⁴² Memoir, 284.

²⁴³ Alan Gowans, Images of American Living, Four Centuries of Architecture and Furniture as Cultural Expression (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1964), 268.

²⁴⁴ Alan Gowans does a good job of describing the symbolism behind classical architecture in America.

The dedication of the monument took place on Nov. 8, 1897, sixty years after Lovejoy's murder. Frank C. Riehl of Alton began the ceremonies by reciting a poem he had written.

Such was our Lovejoy;
So he braved
When none would dare advise,
The darkest consequence, and saved
His country's rarest prize.²⁴⁵

Riehl, in true mythic fashion, presented Lovejoy as a lone individual who fought for a higher cause. Riehl's poem suggests that Lovejoy single handedly saved the freedom of the press. It also depicts a man who was willing to sacrifice his life for the good of the nation. The republican values still hold powerful connotations. Poems have often proved to be a powerful medium in presenting myth, as the case of Longfellow and Revere. Stephen Vincent Benet's epic poem of John Brown and the Civil War, entitled John Brown's Body helped lift Brown to everlasting fame. The lines in poetry are short, sweet, and to the point making their imagery much easier to remember and often more powerful.

Speeches which followed Riehl's poem continued to venerate Lovejoy and reinforce his myth. The Honorable Thomas Dimmock of St. Louis, who had initiated the project, spoke of the monument's value. Dimmock argued that Lovejoy, "does need this monument. It is we who need to give it to him."²⁴⁶ Americans needed the monument to remember Lovejoy's courage, his heroic stance, and his act of self-sacrifice. Dimmock continued: "Then, if not before, we may remember Lovejoy; and, taking courage from his heroic example we shall—I hope and I believe—stand up as he did, and, if need be, die as he did, in defense of the 'unquestionable rights' denied to him."²⁴⁷ The myth serves its

²⁴⁵ Taken from poem of Frank c. Riehl found in Dedication of the Lovejoy Monument Alton, Illinois, November 8th, 1897 (Alton, Ill: Chas Holden, Printer, 1897), 3.

²⁴⁶ Taken from address of Thomas Dimmock found in Dedication, 11.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

function as a lesson. Followers of the myth, as McNeill suggests, will know how to act during crises.

The pastor of the A.M.E. Church, Mr. Wilkerson, represented African-Americans at the dedication service. His speech attempted to instill pride in all Americans, regardless of their color or status. "The monument that we dedicate to-day represents the *ideal American citizen*, Elijah P. Lovejoy, who laid down his life for the rights that belonged to him; not him only, but the rights of every American citizen, be he rich or poor; white or black."²⁴⁸ Lovejoy was clearly not the egalitarian hero that Wilkerson described. His bigotry towards Catholics and immigrants do not represent the ideals of an American hero. He certainly did not lay down his life for Catholics, immigrants, and drunken mobs as Mr. Wilkerson suggested. Wilkerson's speech stripped Lovejoy of his negative attributes and, much like the "founding fathers," Lovejoy had become faultless. The dedication of the monument ignored the uncomfortable flaws of Lovejoy's character and focused on creating a national hero. The myth was once again what was important.

Colby College played no small part in the development and preservation of Elijah Parish Lovejoy's myth. Waterville College, Lovejoy's alma mater, had struggled as an institution prior to the Civil War. "In 1857 Waterville College had only three buildings, in bad repair, and an endowment fund of less than \$15,000."²⁴⁹ In 1865, Mr. Gardner Colby of Newton, Massachusetts permanently changed the direction of Colby by donating \$50,000 to the school. (His total donations later reached \$200,000.) The school's pride had also been restored by the Union soldiers who had graduated from the institution. Waterville College adopted the name of Colby in 1867 and soon became a respectable and thriving institution. Colby uses the myth of Lovejoy to promote its own ideals. Lovejoy possessed virtue, intellect, and honor. The school portrays his characteristics as a reflection

²⁴⁸ Taken from address of Mr. Wilkerson found in Dedication, 18.

²⁴⁹ Edwin Carey Whittemore, Colby College 1820-1925 An Account of Its Beginnings Progress and Service (Waterville, ME: Southworth Press, 1927), 80.

of their own values. Colby considers Lovejoy their first American hero to graduate from the institution.

The college paid particular interest to Lovejoy during its centennial celebrations in 1917 and 1918, which reflected, in many ways, the nation's centennial celebration. Colby acknowledged the great men of their past, who instilled pride in not only the school but the nation. The centennial celebration, which took place in the midst of World War I, especially respected and honored those who had fought and died for their country. Self-sacrifice and republicanism had more potency; American troops were being sent to Europe to uphold democracy. Becker suggests that, "we build our conceptions of history partly out of our present needs and purposes."²⁵⁰ Colby transformed Lovejoy's myth to coincide with the times. His stance against slavery was no longer important; his defence of free speech and his sacrifice for the country were. Mrs. George Hopkins of Alton, Lovejoy's niece, offered Lovejoy's bookcase to Colby for the celebration. Norman Bassett, at the dedication, stated:

Let our boys and girls, day after day, take from, read, and restore to its tender embrace, these books, inspiring symbols of the freedom of the press, for which he lived and died, and as night draws on and shadows fall, there will come with noiseless feet the spirits of noble sons and daughters of Colby who have gone on before us, they who have, in peace and war, toiled and wrought and wrestled and fought in the service of man and the service of God, and reverently they will look upon the spirit of Elijah Parish Lovejoy, the noblest of them all, taken from his humble but shrinelike home.²⁵¹

Although Bassett is overly sentimental, his speech epitomizes the myth of Lovejoy. His thoughts suggested an overwhelming concern of World War I. He reveres Lovejoy's dedication to and sacrifice for the nation. The bookcase remains a cherished part of Colby's collection today, almost as if it has mythic power itself.

²⁵⁰ Snyder, ed., 58-59.

²⁵¹ Whittemore, 166.

Colby College celebrated the 100th anniversary of Lovejoy's murder by inviting the ex-President Herbert Hoover to give a speech in Memorial Hall. His address, given on November 8th, 1937, marked another decisive moment in the preservation and transformation of Lovejoy's myth. Hoover's address made national news and helped to establish Lovejoy as a nationally known figure. However, Lovejoy's myth took on quite a different context in Hoover's speech. By the 1930s, the significance of Lovejoy's stance against slavery had decreased while the importance of his defence of the press and free speech increased. Colby, today, celebrates this aspect more than any other. Hoover's speech was shaped by the political and social realities of his times.

The fear of Communism developed in America after the Russian Revolution of 1917. The end of World War I had left both Russia and Germany in turmoil, which allowed powerful leaders to emerge in the thirties, Hitler and Stalin. Americans saw Communism as a threat to democracy around the world. Robertson argues that, "central to the belief in the Cold War was the perception which had flourished since 1917 that Communism, embodied in the Soviet Union, was a threat to American success and existence in the world."²⁵² Americans took every opportunity to defend the principles behind democracy, most importantly free speech. Hoover's lecture was no different. Although he never directly addresses Communism, he implicated it through his discussion of free speech: "But in the past fifteen years increasing darkness has descended upon free expression and free criticism in the world. That light has been put out in more than half the so-called civilized earth."²⁵³ Hoover stressed the need to battle these "untruths" with truths, and thereby sent a powerful anti-Communism message to his countrymen. He added that, "half truth can be defeated with the whole truth. This antidote works with discouraging slowness at times, but unless we maintain faith in our medicine civilization will despair."²⁵⁴ Hoover had used Lovejoy and his myth, which once battled slavery, to

²⁵² Robertson, 336.

²⁵³ Herbert Hoover, Addresses upon The American Road 1933-1938 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1938), 276.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 280.

fight "undemocratic" enemies around the world. Lovejoy now only represented a hero to free press. Hoover's speech ended with a quote from Lovejoy which said: "As long as I am an American citizen I shall hold myself free to speak, to write and publish whatever I please on any subject, holding myself amenable to the laws of my country for the same."²⁵⁵

Colby College developed the Lovejoy Fellowship award in 1952 to honor, "a member of the newspaper profession who continues the Lovejoy heritage of fearlessness and freedom."²⁵⁶ Recipients of the award, which began with James Soule Poupe in 1952, have included Arthur Hayes Sulzberger, John Hay Whitney, A.M. Rosenthal, J. Anthony Lewis, and most recently David Halberstam. In 1987, Colby College released a book, entitled Elijah Parish Lovejoy: A Remembrance, which highlighted segments of the speeches given by the winners. President William Cotter, in the introduction, wrote: "As Colby seeks to honor its illustrious graduate on the sesquicentennial of his martyrdom, it is especially fitting that, from the ranks of our finest contemporary journalists, we have gathered writings that reflect upon the forces that still threaten and protect the liberties of the First Amendment."²⁵⁷ Cotter's modern day concerns include free expression.

Colby's single greatest tribute to Lovejoy occurred in 1959. The college moved its campus from a spot alongside the Kennebec River to Mayflower Hill in Waterville. The second largest academic building received the name of Lovejoy; its dedication occurred on November 30, 1959. A letter from President Dwight Eisenhower to President Bixler which recognized the building, is encased in the ground floor entranceway to "Lovejoy." Eisenhower writes: "Named for an heroic defender of America's tradition of freedom of speech and of the press, this building is a fitting addition to the campus of a college dedicated to the teaching of the truth--especially to the college from which he graduated

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Taken from the program for The 45th Elijah Parish Lovejoy Convocation held at Colby College on Nov. 13, 1997.

²⁵⁷ Elijah Parish Lovejoy: A Remembrance (Waterville, ME: Colby College, 1987), 11.

long ago." Eisenhower's letter, which echoes the speeches given at the dedication of the monument in Alton, states: "Lovejoy gave his life in recognition of the hard fact that to preserve freedom a man must stand bravely for it against all enemies." Lovejoy's myth continues to represent the ideals of republicanism, especially those of self-sacrifice and liberty.

Lovejoy's myth has manifested itself in innumerable ways throughout the twentieth century. One can find thousands of references to Lovejoy which can be found in anything from books to magazine articles. Americans love their heroes; Colby College houses a jar that contains clay from the farm in Albion where Lovejoy was born. The Editor's Hall of Fame, established by the Illinois Press association, elected Lovejoy as the third inductee on Oct. 12, 1928.²⁵⁸ The Association revealed a marble bust statue of Lovejoy, done by Oskar J.W. Hansen, only two years later. Radio scripts and plays dramatizing Lovejoy's life have appeared on air more than once. Lovejoy's story has even managed to enter into a Sunday School lesson. Today, Presbyterian Minister Robert Tabscott of St. Louis heads the Elijah Parish Lovejoy Society. They rededicate the Lovejoy monument every ten years, provide scholarships yearly, and celebrate the myth of Lovejoy.

²⁵⁸ Editor's Hall of Fame (Memorial Booklet and Program of the Dedication and First Unveiling on Fri. Nov. 21, 1930. Established by the Illinois Free Press Association) found in Lovejoy Collection, Miller Library, Waterville, ME.

Conclusion

The issue, of course, is to whom do heroes and martyrs belong? To themselves and the historical reality out of which they emerged, or to fiction as it has been preserved and used over the centuries? This question was debated in an unlikely and curious encounter between Richard Marius, one of [Sir Thomas] More's most perceptive and persuasive biographers, and Mario Cuomo, then the governor of New York. The governor complained that he did not "want to hear that Horatius was a secret shareholder in the bridge company, or that Lincoln was chronically constipated," or that "Thomas More was obsessed sexually." "I don't need to see his warts. I'm surrounded by people with warts; I have my own warts." Cuomo pictured his More standing eternally "a prisoner on a scaffold, joking with the sheriff, forgiving his executioners, dying the 'king's good servant but God's first.'" He wanted to preserve Sir Thomas as the most comfortable of all martyrs who could remind him "how easy it is to lose your head. And that sometimes it may be worth it." In response Marius answered as any historian must: he liked and admired More "so much that I want him to appear in history as he was in life. Human beings have a right to their character."²⁵⁹

Throughout my study of Lovejoy, I struggled to find an answer to the debate which Lacey Baldwin Smith just described. I was not trying to discredit Lovejoy and prove that he is not worthy of his myth or his martyrdom. Nor did I want this to be a celebration of Lovejoy as a true American hero. I realized that I, too, had the power to shape Lovejoy's image. I could turn him into a bigot who hated Catholics and immigrants. I could describe him as a selfish man, who was just trying to protect his property and had no interest in the good of the Commonwealth. However, I did not want to become too cynical; I did not want to reject heroism and lessen faith in humanity. My goal was not to present the nation's past as a pack of lies. So instead, I could have focused on Lovejoy's noble characteristics and attempt to instill pride in people. I could have described him as a truly egalitarian hero who fought for the liberty of the slave, defended free speech, and battled

²⁵⁹ Smith, 151.

for the good of the Republic. However, I thought that the reader and writer would become too skeptical. I didn't want to portray Lovejoy as perfect.

In the end, I think Richard Marius's response to Cuomo provides the best answer. I wanted to depict Lovejoy as he was. The audience and the author could then decide whether they love, hate, or are indifferent to the character. By presenting the past as accurately as possible, the writer reduces the possibility of cynicism and skepticism. The past becomes more believable, more exciting, and more real. Learning about Lovejoy's disdain for Catholicism and immigrants is at first a disappointment and the power of his myth is lost. However, Lovejoy becomes more understandable as a figure in the early nineteenth century; his real life provides better insight into the social, political, and religious forces of his period. I believe that Lovejoy comes alive when his true self is uncovered. He becomes a fascinating character in history who reveals the complexities of his times. Furthermore, Lovejoy's flaws allow us to see him as human. We have trouble relating to him without his imperfections; his myth makes his status unattainable and his heroics unachievable. I attempted to leave Lovejoy with a "right to his character" by portraying him as neither evil or angelic, but as a man.

However, I do not want to suggest that myths are useless or unimportant. It is true that history is often more exciting and more informative than the myth, but I believe myths play a crucial role in our society. They help create and strengthen national pride. They teach, as McNeill suggests, nations how to behave in crisis situations. Nations that lack national myths have difficulty uniting. It is our perceptions of the past that help us define who we are. These common myths help to distinguish Americans from British and Chinese from Japanese. Each country has their own heroes which invariably play a part in their culture and society. Carl Becker writes: "Whether the general run of people read history books or not, they inevitably picture the past in some fashion or other, and this picture, however little it corresponds to the real past, helps to determine their ideas about politics and

society."²⁶⁰ Myths teach us about ourselves. They tell us what qualities we respect and what characteristics we despise. Myths reflect the world in which we want to live. They provide us with a sense of pride and vigor. Myths helps us to remember that liberty, free speech, and equality were not always guaranteed, and are still not. They remind us that it did take self-sacrifice and heroism to preserve and create the freedom we enjoy.

Although history and myth often appear to be quite dissimilar, I believe they can work together. While learning about our heroes flaws does take away from the mythic image, Americans should continue to remember and celebrate them. I still feel pride when I hear stories of the patriots during the Revolution. The image of Paul Revere racing through villages on his horse to warn the colonists of the British is still meaningful, as is Thomas Jefferson writing the Declaration of Independence, or George Washington crossing the Delaware. The fact that many of the founding fathers were slaveholders does not destroy their heroics. We should champion their great deeds but remember their flaws. Without the reality, national myths have the potential of being misused or falling flat. The fact that our heroes and martyrs were complicated men and women in a complex period gives history a whole new fascination. Elijah Parish Lovejoy was just a man, with good and bad qualities. But his heroic defence of the press and his fight against slavery created a myth far more powerful and useful than his life could ever have been.

Though dead he still speaketh; and a united world can never silence his voice. Ten thousand presses, had he employed them all, could never have done what the simple tale of his death will do. Up and down the mighty streams of the west his voice will go: it will penetrate the remotest corner of our land: will be heard to the extremities of the civilized world.²⁶¹

—Reverend Edward Beecher on Lovejoy (1838)

²⁶⁰ Becker, 61.

²⁶¹ Beecher, 102.

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