

7-1-2014

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Recommended Citation

Chrystal, William G.. "Elijah Lovejoy's Oration on The Fiftieth Anniversary of American Independence: An Essay Discovered." *Maine History* 48, 2 (2014): 301-318. <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mainehistoryjournal/vol48/iss2/5>

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Elijah P. Lovejoy

Etching of Elijah Parish Lovejoy by Jacques Reich, 1888. While Elijah P. Lovejoy is most widely recognized for his later work as an abolitionist printer, he was a schoolmaster in Maine at the time of the American jubilee on July 4, 1826. James Grant Wilson and John Fiske, eds., *Appletons' Cyclopædia of American Biography*, Vol. 4 (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 34.

ELIJAH LOVEJOY'S ORATION ON THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE: AN ESSAY DISCOVERED

WILLIAM G. CHRYSTAL¹

On July 4, 1826, the American republic celebrated its fiftieth anniversary with great fanfare. In this research note, the author provides a transcript of an oration delivered in China, Maine on that day. The speaker was local schoolmaster Elijah P. Lovejoy, better known for his tragic death eleven years later. By then an abolitionist newspaper editor in Alton, Illinois, Lovejoy was killed in 1837 by a pro-slavery mob. Lovejoy's 1826 oration, then, serves as both a compelling look at the celebration of America's Jubilee in rural Maine and an early example of the ideological convictions which led Lovejoy to abolitionism. The author is a retired United Church of Christ minister. He has published many books and journal articles, including one in the Nevada Historical Society Quarterly about Elijah Lovejoy's only child, Edward P. Lovejoy.

AMERICANS were optimistic when the United States celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1826. The Portland (ME) *Eastern Argus*, explained, "As a nation, we have innumerable reasons for thankfulness and triumphant rejoicing. The clarion of war sounds not in the land, and 'the bird of Jove is chained to Vernon's height.'" It's an obscure editorial reference, but one that can be parsed. By definition, a "bird of Jove" is a predator. And "Vernon's height" is, quite likely, a reference to George Washington's home, Mount Vernon. Thus, the editor cleverly explains that not only do his readers live in a time of peace, but it is clear that peace and prosperity are also on the distant horizon.² Americans did, indeed, have much to celebrate. For the editor of the *Eastern Argus*, this called for "sending the incense of our national gratitude on high, mid the roar of cannon, the sound of bells, the shouts of human voices,

and every other means which art and ingenuity can devise, to give importance, splendor and impression to this joyous and triumphant JUBILEE.”³

Celebration in America went back to its earliest days. The Pilgrims of New Plymouth commemorated their first year in the new world with a day of thanksgiving. The colonists in Jamestown, Virginia, did the same. Likewise, in times of famine and peril, colonists turned to God with days of “humiliation and prayer.” Indeed, as David Waldstreicher points out, “Fast and thanksgiving days were among the oldest ways that Anglo-Americans had negotiated the divide between the temporal and spiritual worlds.” The Fourth of July was no exception. Almost every observance of it also included local clergy. Not only was it important to celebrate national independence, it was also provident to ask God’s blessing for the infant nation.⁴

Celebration of American independence had first been suggested by John Adams, who believed July 2, 1776, was the most appropriate date to observe. It was the day when the Continental Congress voted to separate from Great Britain. Others thought July 4, the day the Declaration of Independence was adopted, was better. In either case, Adams knew that any event should be both ceremonial and celebrative—that there should be a combination of “pomp and parade” as well as “shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations.”⁵

Over time, the Fourth of July evolved into an important rite in the early republic. According to Len Travers, it “fed and reflected the idealized (if only partly realized) nationalism of the Revolution and the years immediately following. . . . In the ensuing decades, the continued observance of these rites was increasingly vital to the maintenance of a collective belief in (or myth of) a national community that superseded a myriad of regional identities and interregional antagonisms.”⁶ By the end of the War of 1812, July Fourth celebrations were a staple in many American communities—particularly the larger ones. As a New England author later explained, “One of the most important gala days, not only in New England, but throughout the whole of the United States, is the anniversary of our national independence. . . . There is in this land much love of country.”⁷

Yet the coming of the American Jubilee in 1826—the fiftieth anniversary of independence from Great Britain—yielded more and bigger celebrations. Metropolitan areas pulled out all the stops. Nationally known orators, militia leaders, and influential clergymen were all called upon to play their part in the festivities. Smaller communities also

looked forward to the occasion. In Maine, the *Bangor Weekly Register* presented a town-by-town list of Fourth of July speakers, showing the ubiquitousness of public oration as part of the festivities.⁸ Speakers were often one part of a wide range of events. The *Hallowell Gazette*, for example, announced Hallowell's program for the Fourth. It consisted of a procession with military escort, music, a prayer, oration, more music, an original poem for the occasion, and then a procession to Mr. Palmer's Hotel "to partake of a dinner, which will be served up in Mr. Palmer's best style for the occasion."⁹

The residents of China, Maine, also planned a big celebration. China, in Kennebec County, was incorporated in 1818 by an act of the Massachusetts legislature which combined the towns of Harlem, Fairfax (Albion), and Winslow. The name chosen for the new community was Bloomville, but, when a representative from the town of Bloomfield objected, the name "China" was picked. Allegedly, it was the name of the favorite tune of the area's representative in the Massachusetts legislature, Japheth C. Washburn.¹⁰

China's celebration was planned by town leaders. Washburn, G.A. Benson, and Thomas Burrill formed a committee for the purpose of orchestrating a suitable celebration. All three were among the town's earliest residents. The committee decided to ask Elijah P. Lovejoy, the new preceptor (principal) of China Academy, to speak. Lovejoy had grown up in nearby Albion and was finishing his studies at Waterville (now Colby) College.¹¹ Accepting the invitation, Lovejoy delivered a rousing speech, full of strong nationalist imagery and references to a striking range of cultural works. Despite growing up in rural Maine, Lovejoy was clearly well read—a testament, perhaps, to just how worldly life could be in the Early Republic, even in a small town of a frontier region.

The new teacher's performance on July Fourth must have exceeded local expectations. The committee asked him the very next day for a copy so it could be published. Lovejoy readily complied. As such, the resulting essay is the earliest of Elijah Lovejoy's published works and his only known imprint. Furthermore, it has gone unnoticed until now. Lovejoy's *Oration* is important because it provides a glimpse into the mind of a young idealist. Examining Lovejoy's thoughts on the importance of American independence and on one's duties in a changing world, it is possible to anticipate some of his later actions. In this essay, one can see a martyr in the making.¹²

Elijah Lovejoy is one of the nation's best known abolitionists. His death in Alton, Illinois, in 1837, defending his printing press from a pro-

Gentlemen designated in the order of Procession, are respectfully invited to assemble at the Town Hall, by 11 o'clock, A. M. in order to join the Procession, which will move punctually at the hour appointed.

At eleven o'clock, Refreshments will be provided; for subscribers to the dinner and invited guests, in the third story of the Town Hall.

Tickets to the Dinner at \$2 may be had at the Stores of Stephen Patten, Henry H. Boody, John Williams, and at Mr. Kendall's Tavern.

The Hall will be open for the reception of Ladies and Gentlemen who may wish to view the decorations, from 8 until 10 o'clock, in the morning.

By order of the Com. of Arrangements,
JOHN WILLIAMS, Chairman.
GEORGE WARREN, Secretary.

—*—

FIRE WORKS:

Mr. Tomp—From the notice in your last paper, an exhibition of Fire Works is expected this Evening. The public are informed that no exertions were spared for a brilliant display; a sufficient sum was collected, and sent to Boston for the purpose, but, owing to the unprecedented demand for them, none could possibly be obtained in season.

Portland, Maine's Jubilee Celebrations. While China, Maine, celebrated America's Jubilee in part with Elijah Lovejoy's oration, Portland also had a full day of celebrations planned. Here, Portland's *Eastern Argus* newspaper relays details provided by the city's "Committee of Arangments". A parade and dinner were included, but fireworks were unfortunately sold out for the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. From the *Eastern Argus*, July 4, 1826, p. 2.

slavery mob, made his name a household word. President John Quincy Adams called Lovejoy "the first American martyr to the freedom of the press and the freedom of the slave." Born in Albion on November 9, 1802, he was the oldest of nine children. His father, Daniel, was a farmer and Congregational minister, as was his father, Francis, before him. Elijah's mother, Elizabeth Pattee Lovejoy, was a pious soul—a spiritual guide for a number of her children.¹³

Lovejoy was taught by his mother to read the Bible by the time he was four. He also memorized more than one hundred and fifty hymns, which he recited in a single recitation. He was a voracious reader who attended the district school for a few months each year, and, later, China Academy. Lovejoy's father was one of its trustees when he served as pastor of the Congregational Church in Albion. Not only did Elijah devour his father's theological books, but any others he could lay hold of as well.

He also liked to write poetry. Elijah was athletic and a good swimmer, and he spent a lot of time helping his father on the farm.¹⁴

Academies were just becoming prevalent in the Northeast when Elijah attended the one in China. Unlike district schools, which often aimed at basic literacy for young people who would live in the community for the rest of their lives, academies sought “to move students past their ‘native walls’ and to fit them for ‘a larger society,’ a national society,” according to J.M. Opal. In such a setting, “the real work of emulation” took place.¹⁵ Emulation held that by studying the lives of famous people, pupils could develop within themselves the habits of great people and become highly functional themselves. “Together, the peer classing, liberal learning, and ‘exciting’ pedagogy of the academies forged a new school experience that openly avowed the ambition for excellence and visibility.”¹⁶ Lovejoy thrived in such a setting, and his later life shows he clearly embraced the academy system’s principle that educated citizens could actively participate in events on a national level.

In the fall of 1823, Lovejoy entered Waterville College. Before graduating at the head of his class in August 1826, he accepted the position of preceptor at his former academy in China. He remained there for one school year and then, restless, departed for the west.¹⁷ For a time, Lovejoy ran a profitable school in the frontier town of St. Louis; in 1830, he left the school to serve as owner/editor of the *St. Louis Times*.¹⁸ He also experienced a religious conversion that caused him to return east and enter Princeton Theological Seminary in New Jersey. After that, he returned to St. Louis in 1833.¹⁹

Lovejoy accepted an offer to edit the *St. Louis Observer*, a religious newspaper affiliated with the Presbyterian Church. He became an abolitionist gradually, largely in response to local events. It began when he spoke out about the burning death of a free African-American named Francis McIntosh. McIntosh killed a constable, following a misunderstanding, and was put in jail. Taken from there by an angry mob, he was lashed to a tree and set on fire.²⁰ Lovejoy attracted the ire of a number of locals when he condemned the mob justice which led to McIntosh’s death. His subsequent printed attack on the judge who ruled on McIntosh’s death—and held the deceased African-American responsible for what transpired—further inflamed others. A mob destroyed Lovejoy’s press and many household items.²¹ As a result, Lovejoy decided to move the *Observer* from Missouri, a slave state, to Alton, in the free state of Illinois. In a final issue from St. Louis, Lovejoy insisted that the move had “not been actuated solely, nor even mainly, by personal considerations”

but in the best interest of the paper, which kept virtually the same area of circulation.²²

Elijah's disappointments continued in Alton. Added to the one printing press and household items destroyed by the mob in Missouri, two more presses met their end in Illinois. All were consigned to the Mississippi River by mobs consisting of locals, with a few ruffians from St. Louis thrown in for good measure. A fourth press arrived and was stored in a warehouse. A sympathetic group of local residents were determined to uphold law and order. They joined Lovejoy to protect his press. Again, mob action ensued. When it was over, Lovejoy was dead, shot through the heart, and two of his supporters in the warehouse were wounded. The press was thrown into the Mississippi River, joining the others.²³

As has already been noted, Lovejoy's death added fuel to the abolitionist cause. Many converts, including Elijah's brother Owen Lovejoy, now saw slavery as a cancer, eating away at the republic's very existence. Elijah P. Lovejoy was eulogized in churches and newspapers across the country. In one public meeting in Hudson, Ohio, a man named John Brown rose and vowed to avenge Lovejoy's death. A book about Lovejoy, written by two of his brothers, sold thousands of copies. Dead, Elijah P. Lovejoy accomplished what he was unable to do while living—to arouse great indignation in the north against slavery.²⁴

Elijah's 1826 Fourth of July oration is an interesting window through which to examine his later life. His talk was delivered less than twelve years before his short life ended. In the speech's rousing rhetoric, one sees glimpses of the future newspaper editor and abolitionist—an articulate and earnest advocate of both freedom of the press and freedom of the slave. It is apparent, when reading Lovejoy's talk, that although his conversion to abolitionism was gradual, he nonetheless embraced a number of beliefs while living in China which reflect his later course. Not only does he suggest that those in his audience are "the chosen instruments of Heaven, in beginning the glorious work of emancipating the world," but that American citizens, on account of all they inherited from their forebears, must bear an "awful accountability" for their own actions. Given the way later events unfolded, one is especially struck by Lovejoy's assertion that, in contrast to their forebears, "We are not called to sacrifice our lives or our fortunes in the holy cause of Liberty." The fact that Lovejoy thought deeply about such things at such an early point suggests that he was ripe for conversion to the abolitionist cause. Only one additional thing was required—an up-close exposure to slavery.



Elijah Lovejoy's Martyrdom. This emblem illustrated an 1839 sonnet by Maria Weston Chapman entitled "The Anniversary of Lovejoy's Martyrdom." The emblem features Liberty, standing between a printing press and a freed slave, an empty shackle and dormant whip seen laying open on the ground. Lovejoy is credited as "The first MARTYR to American LIBERTY." The sonnet was originally published in *The Liberty Bell*, an annual periodical of the American Anti-Slavery Society. From Maria Weston Chapman, ed. *The Liberty Bell*, Vol. 1 (Boston: American Anti-Slave Society, 1839), p. 69.

Elijah Lovejoy believed in American exceptionalism. He knew the American example was lighting the way for others around the world, especially in war-torn Greece. It was only a matter of time until he came face to face with slavery. When he did, he quickly realized that a yearning for freedom lay much closer to home than Greece. In 1826, Lovejoy ardently believed in liberty and in individual responsibility. Confronted by the ugly face of slavery, he began to apply those beliefs to slaves within the borders of his own country. The following oration, delivered by a schoolteacher in rural Maine, provides an insight into Fourth of July celebrations as experienced in small towns in the Early Republic. Further, it

is a telling look at the furtive idealism of the young man who would become known as a martyr for abolitionism and freedom of press in the United States.

An Oration Delivered at China, July 4th, 1826: Being the Fiftieth Anniversary of American Independence

BY ELIJAH P. LOVEJOY²⁵

When, amidst the changes of time, a nation is born to the kingdoms of the earth, it is with pride and with pleasure, that its sons record the day of its birth. This is natural and it is wise. Such periods are the landmarks to future ages. While every thing else in the national polity is varying and uncertain, these never move.—They are hallowed ground; and none can tread thereon, who does not find his feelings chastened, and his thoughts exalted. Amid the collisions of party and the bickerings of faction, here all may meet; and, while upon the sacred altar of their country, they sacrifice their feelings of hostility, the incense of patriotism ascends in the flame, a sweet smelling savour to heaven.

Such are the effects, which even a common interest, and the pride of national existence, are calculated to produce. How much brighter, then, should glow, and how much deeper burn, the flame, when, in addition to these, we also bow at the shrine of Liberty?—When we recognise, in the founders of our empire, men, whose motives were as pure, as their hearts were firm:—who reared the holy temple of Freedom where we now worship, and who were martyrs for the blessings we now enjoy?

This day is the anniversary of our independence—a day of joy and of gladness—the Jubilee of Freemen. Fifty years ago, this day, was heard echoing along the shores of our Atlantic, till it reechoed in the ears of astonished Britain, the memorable declaration,—These United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and Independent States. Fifty years ago, this day, first floated in the air, free and undazzled as its own mountain eagle, our national banner, crowned and encircled with the bright halo of Liberty's stars. Fifty years ago, was laid the foundation of that broad and

lofty dome, to which, on this day, twelve millions of joyous freemen bring their thankofferings. Do not your bosoms swell, and your hearts exult at thought of this? Do you not, as through the misty veil of years, you gaze on this immortal deed—do you not send forth your aspirations, and claim kindred with the mighty spirits that achieved it? Do you not catch their enthusiasm, and are you not prepared now to say—we are and must be free and independent States?—I know you are; and you are not alone. From the banks of the St. Croix to the Mississippi; from our eastern shores far over the lofty Alleghenies, the same sentiment is, at this moment, swelling from the glad voice of millions. Thousands and ten thousands of anthems are, at this moment, pealing along the “fretted aisle,” in grateful thanksgiving for the privileges of this day. And who of us would refuse to join the full chorus? Who, that does not wish to raise it till it pervade the whole earth, and tell to all, the prosperity, and the happiness, and the glory of our beloved country.

Let us, then, while our hearts are warm with honest exultation, and, that we may the better realize what reasons we have for devout joy and thankfulness, contemplate what we were fifty years ago, and what we are now.

Fifty years ago, we were unknown to the world, or known only as the unimportant colonies of Britain. Far removed from Europe, the seat of arts and of arms, we attracted no attention, and we inspired no sympathy. Few in numbers, and still fewer in resources, in addition to the hardships and difficulties, which must always attend a young and unorganized people, we were struggling for existence, with the mightiest power on the globe. We had thrown the gauntlet against the fearful odds, and honour, and life, and liberty, was the stake. None could shrink from the contest; they must be warriors or slaves. None wished to shrink from it. Unyielding and undaunted, all stood prepared to breast the torrent, or be buried in the ruins it made. What, think you, must have been the feelings of the venerable authors of the declaration of your independence, which you have this day heard, when they were assembled in the hall of legislation? They knew the momentous consequences, which must follow; they knew that the fate of unborn millions hung upon their fiat; they knew the awful responsibility that must rest upon their names to all succeeding generations—success was more than doubtful; defeat was death and present infamy—yet they quailed not;— with united voice, they pledged to each other, in support of their declaration, their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honours. Here was a sacrifice, which we can never appreciate. We know not, we never can know, the stern, yet pious intenseness of feeling, which, at that time, pervaded all ranks, and swelled, and burst from every heart.

Fifty years ago, our fields were desolate and untilled; for the arm that should have cultivated them was nerved for the deadly strife. The glittering flames of our dwellings lit the savage to slaughter; and the luxuries of our cities fed a lawless and licentious soldiery. War and rapine were stalking over the land, and death and dismay following in their train. Unfed and unpaid, our soldiers were tracking with their blood the wintry snows, or fainting beneath a sultry sun, while ruthless mercenaries were pursuing them with un pitying eagerness, or wasting in riot their hard-earned and scanty pittance. How must their generous hearts have been wrung with anguish, how must their souls have trembled with indignation, as they looked around them, and beheld this fair land, their rightful inheritance, purchased by blood and redeemed by toil, groaning under the foot of the invader—themselves hunted down for destruction without pity or remorse! Perhaps—when they thought of their beloved home, from whence they had been driven—perhaps a tender wife, or an affectionate daughter, were vainly calling upon them for aid, from the violence of an unsparing foe. Such were the scenes, such were the sufferings, which our country witnessed but ten lustres since.

We do not mention these things in a spirit of bitterness against the land of our fathers. We would be the last to awaken those animosities, which have too often rankled in the bosom of either country. In an unguarded hour, they sought to oppress us in maintaining those very privileges, for which they had so often themselves successfully bled. But they have long since repented; and we should remember it no more against them. Let us never forget that England is the home of our ancestors, and that from her venerable treasures, we have drawn much of all that is valuable in the institutions of our country. No, we mention these things, that you may know the price which is put into your hands; that you may realize the cost of the fair inheritance which you possess.

Let us now turn to the fair side of the picture; and here, how changed! Cast your eyes over this wide domain, and you every where find reason for joy and gratulation. A few, insignificant colonies have risen to be a mighty nation. A weak, and often desponding people, now possess the energies, and glory in the vigour of manhood. We have passed the dreadful ordeal, and have come out, not only unhurt, but with renovated strength. Instead of the havoc and desolation of war, all is peace and security. None can terrify, and none dare molest us, while we enjoy all the blessings of plenty, in the full fruition of tranquility.

The arm of industry has carried far into the west, the arts and the comforts of civilization; where fifty years ago the wild beast of the desert roamed unmolested and “unscared;”

And cities swell where forests frowned;
But fifty years ago.²⁶

The sturdy hands of our yeomen have weeded the thorny wilderness, till it has blossomed and bloomed in beauty. The stamp of genius has been impressed upon the wild grandeur of nature, until it has been softened and smoothed into grace and utility. The dark and sullen waters of our western lakes have been taught to flow over mountains and vales to the Atlantic, and the disparted rock sees the richly laden boat gliding unimpeded through it. At home, self-confidence marks our public councils, and abroad we challenge respect and admiration. Our voice is heard with deference in every cabinet of Europe. Our commerce visits every sea, our navies ride in every harbour; and, at this moment, there is hardly a port in the civilized world, whose ensigns are not veiled in honour to the star-spangled banner of young American.

Now, indeed, we may adopt the words of Britain's eloquent orator, who thus speaks of our character for energy and enterprise. "What in the world is equal to it? Whilst we follow them among the tumbling mountains of ice, and behold them penetrating into the deepest frozen recesses of Hudson's bay and Davis's streights, whilst we are looking for them beneath the arctic circle, we hear that they have pierced into the opposite region of polar cold, that they are at the antipodes, and engaged under the frozen serpent of the south. Faulkland Island, which seemed too remote and romantic an object for the grasp of national ambition, is but a stage and a resting place in the progress of their victorious industry; nor is the equinoctial heat more discouraging to them, than the accumulated winter of both the poles. We know that while some of them draw the line, and strike the harpoon on the coast of Africa, others run the longitude, and pursue their gigantic game along the coast of Brazil. No sea but what is vexed by their fisheries; no climate that is not witness to their toils."²⁷

It is natural then to inquire, what has enabled us to do this? What has imparted to us this high-toned character, this untiring research, this restless activity? Is it the grandeur of our mountains, the magnitude of our rivers, or the broad and boundless expanse of our inland seas? It cannot be.—The slave still dwells at the foot of the Alps; the Danube still roles through a land of tyranny and inertness, and timid, sluggish hordes still wander on the banks of the Caspian. Were we more favoured in the outset, than nations before us had been? Was the race all cleared and the path direct, which let us to happiness and prosperity? Were we supplied with friendly guides to direct our steps, and recall us when we wandered—skillful pilots, who should warn us of the whirlpools and quicksands of the sea

on which we were afloat, and assist us to reach the desired haven? No, no,—the very reverse of this. Innumerable difficulties were in the way; a thousand dangers around us.—The course was new and untried—We were unaided and alone;—with no eye to pity or arm to save; if we perished, we perished unwept and unlamented. But, thank God, we survived, a glorious monument, that heaven never forgets the good, and that virtuous exertions never go unrewarded.

What, then, we ask again, in the perilous struggle sustained us so nobly, and finally brought us off so triumphantly? We answer, Freedom, free institutions, equal rights, and a consciousness that we labored not for others, but for ourselves and our posterity. This was the talisman that removed every obstruction, and made every difficulty give way—This it was that enkindled in the soul that flame, which no floods could quench, nor waters drown, nor human power extinguish.—This it was, which lit the beacon on high, to be as a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night, to give light and safety to its votaries.—And has freedom done this for us? Has she led us by the hand through all the trials of youth and inexperience, and finally clothed us in the robes of peace and triumph? Is it her spirit diffused through our institutions, that has made them the glory and the praise of the whole earth; and how, then, should we cherish that spirit, and prize those institutions!

The age in which we live is an age of wonders—I had almost said of miracles. The world is not the same that it was in the days of our sires. They put the wheel in motion, and it has since been constantly rolling, and every moment has developed some new and astonishing event. The changes of the last half century have defied every calculation of wisdom, and spurned at every axiom of experience. These changes have sometimes been gradual, as new light beamed in upon the mind; and sometimes, like a tornado, sweeping every thing before them, and upturning, in a moment, institutions which had been the growth of ages. Tide after tide has been rolling over Europe, each ingulphing the ruins of the former, and leaving behind it, new scenes of desolation. The nations of the earth have been tossed upon a troubled and chafing sea, where many have been dashed upon the rocks, or whelmed in the waves; while those that have survived and arrived at land, have found, when the waters had subsided, an almost entire new world. The work of destruction had been busy there also, and few traces remain to tell of the pomp and the glory departed.

These mighty revolutions have produced a corresponding effect upon the mind of man. His powers have become strengthened and enlarged, and the circle of his vision more extended. He has acquired more self-confidence, more skill; more curiosity, more intellect. Formerly, he reasoned

from the past to the future; he consulted history for precedents as the rule of his conduct. But now that these are gone, he has no resources left but himself, and is obliged to search his own breast for those directions, which God has implanted there. Here he finds a higher, nobler destiny allotted him than he had ever before conceived of. Here he reads, in characters, in-stamped by the hand of Deity,

He meant, he made us to be great like Him,
Beneficent and active.²⁸

Immediately, new prospects open before him, new motives and new hopes are presented. He, who had slumbered, for ages, at once the dupe and the victim of slavish authority, rises in his strength, casts off the trammels which superstition and bigotry had thrown around him, and walks abroad in his native dignity. He lifts his eye to Heaven and communes with that Being, who has stamped upon him his own immortality.

Would the forms
Of servile custom cramp his generous powers,
Would sordid policies, the barbarous growth
Of ignorance and rapine, bow him down
To tame pursuits, to indolence and fear?
Lo! he appeals to nature, to the winds
And rolling waves, the sun's unwearied course,
The elements and seasons: all declare
For what the eternal Maker has ordained
The powers of man; he feels within himself
His energy divine.²⁹

From this communion with nature and nature's God, he retires with higher views, and a more exalted aim. He demands the propriety of those obligations, which others would fix upon him. He determines to obey no law but that of reason, and acknowledge no sovereignty but what is founded on the good of the subject. It is here that we are to look for the causes of the astonishing revolutions, in the political world, which have happened within the memory of some who now hear me. Men have awakened, as it were, from a dream, and wondered to find themselves chained unresisting to the car of tyranny. They have sprung from their lethargy and moved forward with a vigour and an energy not to be resisted. Nor is it in our country alone, that this mighty movement has taken place. It has pervaded both continents. It has swept along the shores of the Pacific, and extended itself to the isles of the Mediterranean. The same spirit actuates

the whole. The same quenchless ardour kindles in the sunny vales of Spain, and on the frozen hills of Russia. And, if it does not burn with equal brightness in all places, it is still there, working its way, silently, but surely, into every heart.

Knowledge is, in our day, triumphing gloriously, over time, over space, and over prejudice. She is pursuing her adventurous way against the blaze of every science, with undazzled eye, and unwavering aim; and returns not till she is loaded with the "spoils of every art and the wreath of every muse."³⁰ From the perishing ruins of antiquity, she is collecting materials for an edifice, beautiful as virtue, and lasting as immortality. Thousands are at work, in every quarter of the globe, in arranging and simplifying the principles on which it shall be founded. Every where there is a vast community of feeling and cooperation. Politicks, laws and government are subjected to a free discussion. Every thing receives investigation; nothing is taken upon trust, nothing adopted from necessity. Moral force has taken the place of physical. Mind is the great instrument that is at work in producing these results. Not he who wields the sharpest sword, but he who points the keenest argument, is acknowledged superior. As a general truth, it may be said, that the standard of morality is raised higher, and balanced more accurately, than at any former period. Every wind that blows, and every wave that rolls, conveys intelligence of some new advance, made in the arts that tend to the melioration and the stability of human life. Such is the progress of this march of mind, that constant activity is required if we would not be left behind. If we slumber but for a day we find ourselves deserted, and renewed exertions are necessary to regain our relative standing. Nations as well as individuals are all embarked upon the same mighty current, that moves onward and still onward with irresistible force. None can stay it.—He that will not go with it, must sink beneath it. True, it is, that all have not made the same progress; some have proceeded too fast, and some too slow, but all have done something. All have left the darkest, deepest shades of ignorance, and some there are, who, already, inhale the pure air, and bask in the bright sun of Liberty.

You cannot be ignorant to whom I allude. The southern half of our continent is regenerated. Several independent States have arisen modeled after our own, and whose principles of government, are, practically, the same as ours. Never was there a more striking example of the redeeming influence of freedom. Till lately these states were a cipher in the political world. Under the iron rod of the mother country, they were broken down and destroyed. But behold the change! At once, they have sprung to life, and vigour, and animation. Their commerce has given a new impulse to the mercantile world. Their sailors are found in every clime, and their fac-

tors in every port. Light has dispelled the darkness in which they were enveloped, and Liberty, from her temple on the Andes, smiles as she looks down and counts up her happy children!

Shall I tell you also, of heroic but illfated Greece? I cannot do it better than in the words of the immortal warrior poet, who gave his life to her cause, and whose ashes now sleep in her classic ground.

“Spirit of freedom ! when on Phyle’s brow
 Thou sat’st with Thrasybulus, and his train,
 Could’st thou forebode the dismal hour, which now
 Dims the green beauties of thine Attic plain?
 Not thirty tyrants now enforce the chain,
 But every carl would lord it o’er thy land.”³¹

Oppressed and degraded, Greece is bleeding at the foot of the altar of freedom, which she has attempted to rear. Could I tell you the half of the sad reality you would weep with me, at the story of her woes. Could I carry you to her sunny mountains and her verdant vales, I would show you the former crowded with the trembling expectants of death or slavery, and the latter kneaded with the blood of the slain. I would lead you over “ruined fanes, and broken altars,”³² and, at every step, you should tread on the relics of heroes profaned by the rude hand of the barbarian. I would carry you to the humble cottage, and there you might see the aged parents weeping for a beloved son, the victim of a tyrant’s caprice, or agonizing over the degradation of their daughter, immured in the bagnio of the *soul-less* Ottoman. And when you had seen all this, I would not ask for your sympathy; it would have already blazed at the tomb of the brave, or mingled with the ascending sighs of the living. When, too, you saw this people, weak and weary, struggling till life’s last gasp against their accursed oppressors, your prayers would arise to the God of battles, that he would graciously bare his arm for their support, and bring them off triumphant, from so unequal a contest.

It is surely matter of congratulation, that we were permitted to live at this interesting period; and that we were the chosen instruments of Heaven, in beginning the glorious work of emancipating the world.—But then, it becomes us to pause and seriously consider the duties we have now to perform. It is worse than useless; it is sacrilege, to boast of the deeds of our ancestors, if we despise their counsels, and set at nought their admonitions. Have our fathers, in the trying and responsible situation, in which they were placed, performed their duty; then has all their responsibility, with accumulated weight, devolved upon us. Would their names

have descended covered with obloquy, had they been wanting to themselves or their posterity; and what shall we say, should their sons prove recreant? How will future generations rise up and reproach us, if we mar the beautiful structure of our fathers, which we are bound to transmit to them not only unimpaired, but improved and adorned!

We are not called to sacrifice our lives or our fortunes in the holy cause of Liberty. These propitiatory offerings have already been made by purer and worthier hands. She has been appeased for the many insults and mockeries she had suffered so long, and has consented to take up her abode with us. She has brought with her all her train of heaven-descended blessings, and is bountifully bestowing them upon us. It is ours to cherish her spirit, and obey her instructions.

Who, that is an American, can look around him, and behold the important part assigned him in the great drama of human affairs, and not feel, that to whom much is given, of him will much also be required? His country is placed upon a lofty eminence, a light and example to the surrounding world. From the height of this eminence, the voice of Liberty sounds in every benighted quarter of the globe, crying—Bring hither my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth. Here the oppressed of every nation look for rest and peace. Here the wretched from every clime, and the exile from every shore, come to forget their sorrows and their woes. Hither every sigh is breathed, and every eye is turned, as to the only hope in the last great catastrophe of suffering humanity. If we fail in the attempt to give permanency to free institutions, the experiment can never again be expected to succeed. Never can brighter prospects be blasted, or purer principles corrupted. The solemn charge of preserving these principles from declension, Providence has committed to us—God grant we may be found faithful.

For myself, as through the long vista of years, I gaze upon the countless generation, whose everlasting destinies are to be determined by the bias we shall give them, I want words to utter the emotions, which I feel. When I look on this broad land, which has been so peculiarly favoured of Heaven, where the hand of Deity has been so signally interposed, in behalf of his suffering creation; and when I reflect upon the possibility, that we may be left to thwart these designs of mercy to mankind—it is then, that, as American citizens, I feel our awful accountability. Long after we are forgotten, and when no traces of our names shall remain upon the annals of our country; when the monuments of our pride and the schemes of our ambition, shall all have dissolved, and,

—“Like the baseless fabric of a vision,
Left not a wreck behind,”—³³

our influence will be silently, but deeply felt, in every part of this widespread community. Let us then be alive to our duty. Let us act in full view of the tremendous consequences, that will follow a dereliction from the paths of public honour and rectitude. Let us elevate to our councils men upon whose integrity we can rely. Let us meet in frequent and harmonious concourse to pay our thanksgivings to the Almighty for the blessings we enjoy. And if we dare not affirm, that our institutions are planted too deep to be uprooted, or raised too high to be overwhelmed; yet we may rest in the cheering assurance that, while we remain firm to our trust, they will continue to take root, and flourish, and spread till the whole earth be overshadowed by their branches, and their broad summits gilded with the sunshine of Liberty and Peace.

NOTES

1. The author thanks editor Michael T. Perry and an unnamed reader for providing incredibly useful suggestions for making the introduction to Lovejoy's Oration more readable and helpful.
2. *Eastern Argus*, July 4, 1826, 2. Mount Vernon is called "Vernon's height" in Stanza VII of Robert C. Sands' poem "Ode for the Birth Day of Washington." Sands featured the poem in the short-lived literary magazine *The Atlantic Magazine*, of which he himself served as editor. See *Atlantic Magazine*, Vol. 2: November, 1824 - April, 1825 (New York: Bliss and E. White, 1825), 418.
3. *Eastern Argus*, July 4, 1826, 2.
4. David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1996), 145.
5. John Adams to Abigail Adams, July 3, 1776, quoted in Len Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth: Independence Day and the Rites of Nationalism in the Early Republic* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1997), 15. Waldstreicher's *Perpetual Fetes* also begins with John Adams. Waldstreicher offers a lively discussion of the ways celebration in the US was influenced by political differences and social and religious concerns.
6. Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth*, 10.
7. *New England and Her Institutions By One of Her Sons* (Boston: John Allen, 1835), 149, 156.
8. *Bangor Weekly Register*, June 29, 1826, 3
9. *Hallowell Gazette*, June 28, 1826, 3.
10. Marion Thurlow Van Strien, Ed., *China, Maine: Bicentennial History, Including 1984 Revisions* (Weeks, ME: Marion T. Van Strien, 1975), 26.

11. Joseph C. and Owen Lovejoy, eds., *Memoir of the Rev. Elijah P. Lovejoy; Who was Murdered in Defense of the Liberty of the Press at Alton, Illinois, Nov. 7, 1837* (New York, John S. Taylor, 1838), 2, 19-20.
12. Elijah P. Lovejoy, *An Oration Delivered At China, July 4th, 1826: Being the Fiftieth Anniversary of American Independence* (Hallowell: Glazier & Co., 1826). The Committee for China's Fourth of July celebration is named on the front page of the printed *Oration*. Each appears at least once in Van Strien's *China, Maine*.
13. John Quincy Adams, "Introduction," in Lovejoy and Lovejoy, *Memoir of the Rev. Elijah P. Lovejoy*, 12. There are a number of modern biographies of Lovejoy. See Merton L. Dillon, *Elijah P. Lovejoy, Abolitionist Editor* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1961); John Gill, *Tide Without Turning: Elijah P. Lovejoy and the Freedom of the Press* (Boston: Starr King, 1958); and two biographies by the late Senator Paul Simon, *Lovejoy: Martyr to Freedom* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1964), and *Freedom's Champion Elijah Lovejoy* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994).
14. Van Strien, *China, Maine*, 141-2. Joseph C. and Owen Lovejoy, *Memoir of the Rev. Elijah P. Lovejoy*, 18-19. Lovejoy also attended Monmouth Academy for a single term.
15. J.M. Opal, *Beyond the Farm: National Ambitions in Rural New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2008), 110. Opal is quoting Rev. Joseph Lathrop, who spoke at an academy opening in 1800.
16. Opal, *Beyond the Farm*, 115.
17. Elijah's brother, Illinois Congressman Owen Lovejoy, also attended China Academy for a time, probably while his brother was preceptor. See Van Strien, *China, Maine*, 142.
18. Simon, *Freedom's Champion*, 10-11.
19. Simon, *Freedom's Champion*, 21.
20. Daniel A. Graff, "Race, Citizenship, and the Origins of Organized Labor in Antebellum St. Louis," in Thomas M. Spencer, ed., *The Other Missouri History: Populists, Prostitutes, and Regular Folk* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 72-74.
21. Simon, *Freedom's Champion*, 52-60.
22. Lovejoy and Lovejoy, *Memoir of Elijah P. Lovejoy*, 178-179.
23. For a narrative of Lovejoy's death, see "Death" in Simon, *Freedom's Champion*, 118-135.
24. Lovejoy and Lovejoy, *Memoir of the Rev. Elijah P. Lovejoy*.
25. "An Oration Delivered at China, July 4th, 1826: Being the Fiftieth Anniversary of American Independence," (Hallowell, ME: Glazier & Co., 1826), QJ M 081 D26L, Collections of the Maine Historical Society. Thanks are due to Jamie

Kingman Rice, Research Librarian at the Maine Historical Society, for making a copy of this essay available. None of the studies of Lovejoy's life—including the one by his brothers Joseph and Owen—make any reference to it. All spelling and punctuation are as they appear in the original printed oration.

26. Paraphrased from "Ode," a poem by Biddeford, Maine-born poet Granville Mellen (1799-1841). The poem was written for the 1820 anniversary of the *Mayflower's* landing at Plymouth. Lovejoy changed Mellen's refrain of "Two hundred years ago!" to "But fifty years ago," making the line a commemoration of the Declaration of Independence rather than the *Mayflower*. It is also notable that Mellen's original was widely printed in common readers for American schoolchildren, so it is plausible that Lovejoy encountered the poem as either a student or school teacher. See, for example, John Goldsbury and William Russell, *The American Common-School Reader and Speaker: Being a Selection of Pieces in Prose and Poetry with Rules for Reading and Speaking* (Boston: Tappan, Whittemore, and Mason, 1840), 235-237.

27. The quoted portion comes from Edmund Burke's widely published 1775 speech on "Conciliation with America."

28. These stanzas are a shortened version of those which appear in Mark Akenside's *The Pleasures of Imagination A Poem in Three Books* (London, 1744). Akenside wrote, "He meant, he made us to behold and love/ What he beholds and loves, the general orb of life and being ; to be great like him/ Beneficent and active."

29. Akenside, *The Pleasures of Imagination*.

30. This same phrase appears in Lovejoy's Valedictory Address at Waterville College, delivered in September 1826, fragments of which are found in the Wickett-Wiswall Collection at Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, Texas.

31. Quoted from the title poem in Lord Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: A Romaunt and Other Poems* (London: M. Thomas, 1812).

32 This stanza is from Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Queen Mab* (London: R. Carlile, 1822).

33. William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*.