**Elijah Parish Lovejoy**

 (November 9, 1802 – November 7, 1837) was an [American](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) [Presbyterian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presbyterianism) [minister](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minister_%28Christianity%29), [journalist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Journalist),[newspaper editor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Editing) and [abolitionist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abolitionism_in_the_United_States). He was murdered by pro-slavery mob in [Alton, Illinois](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alton%2C_Illinois), during their attack on his warehouse to destroy his press and abolitionist materials.

Lovejoy's father was a [Congregational](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congregational) minister and his mother a devout Christian. He attended [Waterville College](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colby_College) (now [Colby College](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colby_College)) in his home state of [Maine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maine). He traveled west and in 1827 settled in [St. Louis, Missouri](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Louis%2C_Missouri). He worked as an editor of an anti-[Jacksonian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Jackson%22%20%5Co%20%22Andrew%20Jackson) newspaper, the [*St. Louis Observer*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Louis_Observer) and ran a school. Five years later, he studied at the [Princeton Theological Seminary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Princeton_Theological_Seminary) in New Jersey and became an ordained [Presbyterian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presbyterian) preacher. Returning to St. Louis, he set up a church and resumed work as editor of the *Observer*. His editorials criticized slavery and other church denominations.

In May 1836, after anti-abolitionist opponents in St. Louis destroyed his printing press for the third time, Lovejoy left the city and moved across the river to Alton in the free state of Illinois. In 1837 he started the [*Alton Observer*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alton_Observer), also an abolitionist paper. On November 7, 1837, a pro-slavery mob attacked the warehouse where Lovejoy had his fourth printing press. Lovejoy and his supporters exchanged [gunfire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gunfire) with the mob, which fatally shot him. He died on the spot and was soon hailed as a[martyr](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martyr) by abolitionists across the country. After his death, his brother [Owen Lovejoy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Owen_Lovejoy) entered politics and became the leader of the Illinois abolitionists.

Early life and education

Lovejoy was born at his grandfather's frontier farmhouse near [Albion, Maine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albion%2C_Maine), as the first of the nine children of Elizabeth (Pattee) and Reverend Daniel Lovejoy.[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah_Parish_Lovejoy#cite_note-1) Lovejoy's father was a [Congregational](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congregational) preacher and farmer and his mother, a devout Christian. Daniel Lovejoy named his son "Elijah Parish" in honor of his close friend and mentor, the Reverend [Elijah Parish](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah_Parish), who was also involved in politics.[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah_Parish_Lovejoy#cite_note-2) Due to his own lack of an education, he encouraged his sons—Daniel, Joseph Cammett, Owen, John and Elijah—to become educated men. As a result, Elijah was taught to read the Bible and other theological texts at an early age. After completing his early studies in public schools, Lovejoy attended the[Academy at Monmouth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monmouth_Academy_%28Maine%29) and [China](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/China%2C_Maine) Academy. After becoming proficient enough in [Latin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin) and [mathematics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mathematics), he enrolled at [Waterville College](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colby_College) (now Colby College) in[Waterville, Maine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waterville%2C_Maine), as a sophomore in 1823.[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah_Parish_Lovejoy#cite_note-3) He excelled in his studies, and upon faculty recommendation, he became a teacher in the college's preparatory division. Lovejoy received financial support from Reverend [Benjamin Tappan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_Tappan) to continue his attendance at Waterville College.[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah_Parish_Lovejoy#cite_note-Dillonp5-4) His cousin [Nathan A. Farwell](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nathan_A._Farwell) later served as a U.S. Senator from Maine.

In September 1826, Lovejoy graduated from Waterville College with [first-class honors](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin_honors)[[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah_Parish_Lovejoy#cite_note-5) at the [top of his class](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valedictorian).[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah_Parish_Lovejoy#cite_note-6) During the winter and spring, he taught at China Academy. Dissatisfied with daily teaching, Lovejoy thought about moving to the [South](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_United_States) or [Western United States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_United_States). His former teachers at Waterville College advised him that he would best serve God in the West.[[7]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah_Parish_Lovejoy#cite_note-7) Agreeing, Lovejoy in May 1827 moved to Boston to earn money for his journey, having settled on Illinois as his destination.[[8]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah_Parish_Lovejoy#cite_note-8)Unsuccessful at finding work, he started to Illinois by foot. He stopped in [New York City](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_City) in mid-June, to try to find work. He eventually landed a position with the *Saturday Evening Gazette* as a newspaper subscription peddler. For nearly five weeks, he walked up and down streets, knocking on peoples' doors and wheedling passersby, in hopes of getting them to subscribe to the newspaper.[[9]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah_Parish_Lovejoy#cite_note-Dillonp10-9) Struggling with his finances, he wrote to Reverend [Jeremiah Chaplin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeremiah_Chaplin), the president of Waterville College, explaining his situation. Chaplin sent the money that his former student so needed.[[9]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah_Parish_Lovejoy#cite_note-Dillonp10-9) Lovejoy promptly embarked on his journey to Illinois, reaching [Hillsboro](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hillsboro%2C_Illinois), [Montgomery County](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montgomery_County%2C_Illinois), in the fall of 1827. Lovejoy did not think he could do well in Illinois's scantly settled land, so he headed for St. Louis.[[10]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah_Parish_Lovejoy#cite_note-10)

There he quickly established himself as the editor of the [anti-Jacksonian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Republican_Party) newspaper, the *St. Louis Observer*, and as the headmaster of a [coeducational](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coeducation) private school. In 1832, influenced by the [Christian revivalist movement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revivalism) led by [abolitionist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abolitionism_in_the_United_States) David Nelson, he decided to become a preacher.[[11]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah_Parish_Lovejoy#cite_note-11) He returned East to study at the [Princeton Theological Seminary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Princeton_Theological_Seminary), and upon completion, went to Philadelphia, where he became an ordained minister of the [Presbyterian Church](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presbyterian_Church_%28U.S.A.%29) in April 1833. Upon returning to St. Louis, he set up a Presbyterian church and renewed his work as editor of the *St. Louis Observer*.

A major port in a slave state surrounded by free ones, St. Louis was a center of abolitionist and pro-slavery factions. From 1814 to 1860, more than three hundred freedom suits were filed by slaves to gain freedom, often based on their having lived in free territory with their masters. At the same time, it was an area where both free blacks and slaves worked in the city, especially on the waterfront and [steamboats](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Steamboat).

Marriage and family

In 1835, Lovejoy married Celia Ann French, and they had two children.

Move to Alton

Tensions over slavery increased in St. Louis and three times, pro-slavery opponents destroyed Lovejoy's printing press to try to stop his publication. The last time was after he criticized Judge Luke E. Lawfull for his failure to indict individuals linked to a mob [lynching](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lynching) of a free black man.[*[citation needed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed%22%20%5Co%20%22Wikipedia%3ACitation%20needed)*] The man had been taken from jail, where he was being held after killing two law officers during arrest.[[12]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah_Parish_Lovejoy#cite_note-12)

In 1836 Lovejoy moved with his family across the river to Alton, Illinois, in 1836 and the next year founded the [*Alton Observer*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alton_Observer). While in a free state, Alton was also a center for slave catchers trying to capture escaped slaves and for pro-slavery forces. It had been largely settled by southerners.

Wood engraving of the pro-slavery mob setting fire to [Gilman & Godfrey](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Gilman_%26_Godfrey&action=edit&redlink=1)'s warehouse.

On November 7, 1837, pro-slavery [partisans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partisan_%28military%29) approached Gilman's warehouse, where Lovejoy had hidden his printing press.[[13]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah_Parish_Lovejoy#cite_note-NYTimes-13)[[14]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah_Parish_Lovejoy#cite_note-14) According to the *Alton Observer*, the mob fired shots into the warehouse. When Lovejoy and his men returned fire, they hit several people in the crowd, killing a man named Bishop.[[13]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah_Parish_Lovejoy#cite_note-NYTimes-13)

The leaders of the mob set up a ladder against the warehouse. They sent a boy up with a torch to set fire to the wooden roof. Lovejoy and his supporter Royal Weller went outside, surprised the pro-slavery partisans, pushed over the ladder and retreated back inside the warehouse. The mob put up the ladder again; when Lovejoy and Weller went out to overturn it, they were spotted and shot. Lovejoy was hit five times with slugs from a shotgun and died immediately; Weller was wounded. The mob destroyed the new printing press by carrying it to a window and throwing it out onto the riverbank. They broke it up and threw the pieces into the river.

[Francis Butter Murdoch](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Francis_Butter_Murdoch&action=edit&redlink=1), the district attorney of Alton, prosecuted Lovejoy's murder but no one was convicted.

Lovejoy was considered a [martyr](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martyr) by the abolition movement. In his name, his brother Owen became the leader of the Illinois abolitionists. Owen and his brother Joseph wrote a memoir about Elijah, which was published in 1838 by the [Anti-Slavery Society](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-Slavery_Society) in New York and distributed widely among abolitionists in the nation. With his murder symbolic of the rising tensions within the country, Lovejoy is called the "first casualty of the Civil War."[[*citation needed*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia%3ACitation_needed)]

Elijah Lovejoy was buried in [Alton Cemetery](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Alton_Cemetery&action=edit&redlink=1) in an unmarked grave. In 1860, Thomas Dimmock, editor of the Alton Democrat, located the grave and arranged for a proper grave marker. Some of his supporters were later buried near him.

On November 2, 1837, five days before his death, he gave the following speech in Alton on the abolition question:

"It is not true, as has been charged upon me, that I hold in contempt the feelings and sentiments of this community, in reference to the question which is now agitating it. I respect and appreciate the feelings and opinions of my fellow-citizens, and it is one of the most painful and unpleasant duties of my life, that I am called upon to act in opposition to them. If you suppose, sir, that I have published sentiments contrary to those generally held in this community, because I delighted in differing from them, or in occasioning a disturbance, you have entirely misapprehended me. But, sir, while I value the good opinion of my fellow-citizens, as highly as any one, I may be permitted to say, that I am governed by higher considerations than either the favor or the fear of man. I am impelled to the course I have taken, because I fear God. As I shall answer it to my God in the great day, I dare not abandon my sentiments, or cease in all proper ways to propagate them.

"I, Mr. Chairman, have not desired, or asked any compromise. I have asked for nothing but to be protected in my rights as a citizen--rights which God has given me, and which are guaranteed to me by the constitution of my country. Have I, sir, been guilty of any infraction of the laws? Whose good name have I injured? When, and where, have I published any thing injurious to the reputation of Alton?

"Have I not, on the other hand, labored, in common with the rest of my fellow-citizens, to promote the reputation and interests of this City? What, sir, I ask, has been my offence? [sic] Put your finger upon it--define it--and I stand ready to answer for it. If I have committed any crime, you can easily convict me. You have public sentiment in your favor. You have [your] juries, and you have your attorney [looking at the attorney-general], and I have no doubt you can convict me. But if I have been guilty of no violation of law, why am I hunted up and down continually like a partridge upon the mountains? Why am I threatened with the tar-barrel? Why am I waylaid every day, and from night to night, and my life in jeopardy every hour?

"You have, sir, made up, as the lawyers say, a false issue; there are not two parties between whom there can be a compromise. 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 brick-brats and violence of the mobs; that, sir, is the question." [Here, he reportedly broke into tears, then continued.]

"Forgive me, sir, that I have thus betrayed my weakness. It was the allusion to my family that overcame my feelings. Not, sir, I assure you, from any fears on my part. I have no personal fears. Not that I feel able to contest the matter with the whole community; I know perfectly well I am not. I know, sir, you can tar and feather me, hang me up, or put me into the Mississippi, without the least difficulty. But what then? Where shall I go? I have been made to feel that if I am not safe at Alton, I shall not be safe anywhere. I recently visited St. Charles to bring home my family, and was torn from their frantic embrace by a mob. I have been beset night and day at Alton. And now, if I leave here and go elsewhere, violence may overtake me in my retreat, and I have no more claim upon the protection of any other community than I have upon this; and I have concluded, after consultation with my friends, and earnestly seeking counsel of God, to remain at Alton, and here to insist on protection in the exercise of my rights. If the civil authorities refuse to protect me, I must look to God; and if I die, I have determined to make my grave in Alton." - Joseph P. and Owen Lovejoy, *The Martyrdom of Lovejoy, An Account of the Life, Trials, and Perils of Rev. Elijah P. Lovejoy* (1838)