

First Amendment Symbol: Piece of Elijah P. Lovejoy's printing press finds permanent home at library

by Chris Rhodes, Reporter
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ALTON - The legendary piece of Elijah P. Lovejoy's printing press that was once thrown into the Mississippi River by a mob and then rescued, now has a permanent home.

A well-attended dedication unveiled the printing press Sunday at Hayner Public Library at the Downtown Alton location.



Hayner Public Library District Executive Director Bernadette Duvernoy said she and others with the library were “thrilled” to receive the piece of Lovejoy’s press.

“The press weighs half a ton, so it was difficult to move,” she said.

“There was a wonderful turnout today considering the weather. We were excited about the commemoration and dedication of the Elijah P. Lovejoy Print Press at Hayner Library. I don’t think there is a better place for it to be in the world than Hayner Library. The press is now solely our property thanks to Hearst Corporation and The Telegraph.”

Duvernoy said the Lovejoy printing press will rest in the entryway foyer of the library and above it will be a display about Elijah P. Lovejoy and more information.

The press had been in the possession of the Telegraph and then owners Hearst Corporation for many years. Hearst Corporation and The Telegraph arranged to have the press moved to Hayner. Hearst Corporation is the present Telegraph owner.

Elijah P. Lovejoy reenactor John Meehan did a portrayal of the the First Amendment martyr at the presentation.

Lovejoy took the position of anti-slavery in his position as the editor of the Alton Observer. On Nov. 7, 1837, an angry mob shot and killed Lovejoy that night. The press was subsequently thrown in the Mississippi River.

Previous Telegraph Publishers Jim Shrader and Steve Cousley, along with retired College Avenue Presbyterian Church minister George Humbert, spoke at the gathering, along with Lacy McDonald, of Hayner Library.

“We believe having the press here has huge significance,” Duvernoy said. “It’s not just a local story, but nationally, it represents a story of the freedom of the press. We will house it and invite the public to come and view it.”



[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)