

Jane Ann Moore and William F. Moore, *Owen Lovejoy and the Coalition for Equality: Clergy, African Americans, and Women United for Abolition*. Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2020. Xiv., 272 pp. \$28.00.

Despite a thirty year career as a leading religious and political abolitionist, including four terms representing Illinois in Congress, Owen Lovejoy has never attracted the level of historical attention of his older brother Elijah, the antislavery newspaper editor murdered by a mob in 1837. Even the well-researched 1967 biography by Edward Magdol failed to win Lovejoy the same recognition as other early founders of the Republican Party such as Joshua Giddings, Salmon P. Chase, Thaddeus Stevens, or Charles Sumner. This might have been on account of Lovejoy's death in the midst of the Civil War, but this new biography labors hard to record the high status that Lovejoy enjoyed among his antislavery contemporaries.

Authors Jane Ann Moore and William F. Moore are both ordained ministers of the United Church of Christ, and authors of *Owen Lovejoy: His Brother's Blood: Speeches and Writings, 1838-64* (2004), and *Collaborators for Emancipation: Abraham Lincoln and Owen Lovejoy* (2014). Great admirers of Lovejoy, the Moores provide a very detailed account of Lovejoy's life from his Maine upbringing, his long ministry preaching to other transplanted New Englanders at the Hampshire Colony Church in Princeton, Illinois, and his leading role in establishing first the Liberty, then the Free Soil, and finally the Republican Party. They quote copiously from his sermons, speeches, and writings to demonstrate the uncompromising moral principles guiding his antislavery activism even as he rose steadily in first state and then national politics. They find that Lovejoy's "religious vision and political goals were irretrievably intermeshed." (p. 83) The Moores contend that Lovejoy became the true successor to Joshua

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Giddings as the most fearless critic of slavery on the floor of the United States Congress in the final years leading up the Civil War. While opposition to slavery remained his unswerving goal, Lovejoy also played a leading role in passage of the Homestead Act to benefit America's family farmers.

As their book's subtitle indicates, the Moores have a second goal of chronicling the high degree of cooperation in western states among evangelical clergy, African Americans, and early feminists in support of the abolitionist crusade. The Moores use Lovejoy's career to explore the gradual evolution of attitudes toward slavery and race in the Midwest from the 1830s to the 1860s. They acknowledge the strong racist sentiments of early settlers in especially Illinois's southern and central counties, but focus on the steady growth of a "coalition" of religious evangelicals, African American settlers, and women rights advocates who battled relentlessly to repeal such repressive measures as the state's infamous "Black Laws."

The Moores aggressively refute findings of historians of the 1960s and 1970s like Magdol and Eugene Berwanger who contended that the Free Soil and then the Republican Party opposition to slavery's westward expansion was primarily a product of northern racist desire to keep those territories for whites only. Instead the Moore's findings are more in line with conclusions of more recent historians such as Stanley Harrold, Manisha Sinha, Stacey Robertson, Richard Newman, and Julie Roy Jeffrey who emphasize the crucial role of African Americans and women in the abolitionist movement's ranks. The Moores' evidence about nature of the "coalition" supporting the Liberty Party in Illinois seems sound, but their case for the major influence of women and African Americans in the successor Free Soil and Republican Parties in that state is less convincing. They even concede that Lovejoy himself made "pragmatic" compromises over the selection of party candidates and the prioritizing of issues while never

conceding fundamental antislavery and antiracist principles. Overall, their study succeeds in demonstrating that Lovejoy advocated an undiluted abolitionist vision of a social justice in antebellum politics. His death in March 1864 deprived the upcoming debates over Reconstruction of an articulate champion for racial equality. As issues of equal rights again move to the forefront of national politics, the Moores present Owen Lovejoy as a worthy role model for today's political leaders.