

= Joseph Dennie =

Joseph Dennie (August 30 , 1768 ? January 7 , 1812) was an American author and journalist who was one of the foremost men of letters of the Federalist Era . A Federalist , Dennie is best remembered for his series of essays entitled *The Lay Preacher* and as the founding editor of *Port Folio* , a journal espousing classical republican values . *Port Folio* was the most highly regarded and successful literary publication of its time , and the first important political and literary journal in the United States . Timothy Dwight IV once referred to Dennie as " the Addison of America " and " the father of American Belles @-@ Lettres . "

= = Early life and career = =

Dennie was born on August 30 , 1768 , in Boston , Massachusetts to Joseph Dennie , a member of a well @-@ to @-@ do merchant family , and his wife Mary Green , whose father was Bartholomew Green , Jr . The Greens were a prominent printing family in colonial America ; the progenitor of the family , Samuel Green , emigrated from England with John Winthrop and was one of the first printers in the colonies . Having moved to Lexington at the age of seven , Dennie returned to Boston in 1783 to study bookkeeping and later clerk in a counting house . He began preparing to enter Harvard College in 1785 , under the guidance of Reverend Samuel West . West had a significant impact on Dennie , fostering his pupil 's interest in literature , as well as instilling in Dennie a decidedly pro @-@ British mindset .

In 1787 Dennie was admitted to the sophomore class of Harvard College , where he was very popular with his peers . This popularity did not extend to his tutors , and he was suspended in December 1789 for six months after insulting the faculty . Dennie had difficulty finding suitable employment after earning his degree in 1790 , but by 1793 he was practicing law (though earning very little for his work) . In a January 1794 letter to his parents , however , Dennie reports that he had been appointed as a reader for the Episcopalian church in Charlestown , New Hampshire . Nevertheless , he insisted that this new vocation would not deter him from his goal of practicing law , though by then he was planning on remaining in New Hampshire to practice rather than returning to Massachusetts . Shortly after writing the letter , Dennie was admitted to the Court of Common Pleas and opened a practice in Charlestown . However , he rarely appeared in open court ; indeed , he probably made only one appearance .

= = Publishing career = =

Throughout the 1790s Dennie contributed to various journals , including the *Federal Orrery* and the *Massachusetts Magazine* , often using pen names such as *Academicus* and *Socialis* . In 1795 , his writing being enthusiastically received , Dennie was persuaded to begin a literary journal , *The Tablet* . William Spotswood , a Boston printer and bookseller , agreed to oversee the entire enterprise , splitting the profits evenly with Dennie . Such a literary journal was a novel idea at the time , and it was well received among the city 's elite . Despite the initial excitement surrounding the project and content from noted writers such as John Sylvester John Gardiner , *The Tablet* lasted only a few months before folding , having published thirteen issues .

Dennie 's disappointment over the failure of *The Tablet* inspired him to begin work on *The Lay Preacher* , the first of which appeared in *The Farmer 's Weekly Museum* , a New Hampshire newspaper which was the leading literary journal of the 1790s . After Dennie took over as editor of the paper in 1796 , its circulation increased dramatically , stretching , as one commentator put it , " from Maine to Georgia . " Under Dennie 's leadership the paper had a decidedly Federalist slant , supporting both the Quasi @-@ War and the Alien and Sedition Acts . Dennie collaborated often with his friend Royall Tyler ; the two wrote a satirical column by the name of " *The Shop of Messrs. Colon and Spondee* " which appeared in the *Museum* . In 1798 Dennie lost a considerable amount of money when the paper 's printer went bankrupt . He remained as editor for a few months afterward at a reduced salary , but was soon replaced by the printer 's brother . The paper 's

circulation dropped precipitously following Dennie 's departure . Later in the year Dennie ran an unsuccessful campaign for Congress ; following this defeat , he turned down offers to edit several prominent journals , including a generous offer from Boston 's Independent Chronicle , as he refused to work for a Democratic paper . Instead , he accepted an appointment from Timothy Pickering (at the time United States Secretary of State) to a position as Pickering 's personal secretary .

Once in Philadelphia , Dennie resumed his editorial career with the Gazette of the United States , a Federalist @-@ friendly newspaper . In 1800 Dennie , along with Philadelphia bookseller Asbury Dickens , began work on the Port Folio . Under the pseudonym Oliver Oldschool , Esq . , Dennie wrote , in 1803 , a scathing attack on Jeffersonian democracy , for which he was brought up on charges of seditious libel . Dennie wrote , in part :

A democracy is scarcely tolerable at any period of national history . Its omens are always sinister , and its powers are unpropitious . It is on its trial here , and the issue will be civil war , desolation , and anarchy . No wise man but discerns its imperfections , no good man but shudders at its miseries , no honest man but proclaims its fraud , and no brave man but draws his sword against its force . The institution of a scheme of policy so radically contemptible and vicious is a memorable example of what the villany of some men can devise , the folly of others receive , and both establish in spite of reason , reflection , and sensation .

This paragraph was reprinted in Federalist newspapers throughout the country . While Dennie was acquitted , the severity of the attacks leveled in Port Folio would henceforth be lessened . However , when Dennie criticized democracy , it was not the republican democracy found in the United States today , but rather the " democracy " found in France under Robespierre and Napoleon . Dennie was invoking Aristotle 's argument that " an absolute democracy is not to be reckoned among the legitimate forms of government . It is the corruption and degeneracy , and not the sound constitution of a republic . "

= = Death = =

Dennie had health trouble throughout his life , as well as a predilection for wine . His father (who had battled mental illness) died on September 28 , 1811 ; Dennie was not able to attend his father 's funeral , as he himself was gravely ill at the time , and this caused him great grief . He briefly recovered , but succumbed to cholera morbus four months after his father 's death . Dennie died on January 7 , 1812 , and was interred two days later at St. Peter 's Church , Philadelphia . His epitaph was written by John Quincy Adams . The epitaph erroneously gives Lexington , Massachusetts as his birthplace ; in fact , Dennie was born in Boston , but his family moved to Lexington shortly thereafter .

= = Works = =

Dennie , Joseph ; Pedder , Laura Green (2008) . The Letters Of Joseph Dennie 1768 @-@ 1812 . Kessinger Publishing . ISBN 1 @-@ 4366 @-@ 9456 @-@ 6 .

Dennie , Joseph ; Hall , John E. (1817) . The Lay Preacher . Harrison Hall .

= = Supplemental bibliography = =

Rothman , Irving N. (1973) . " Alexander Wilson 's Forest Adventure : the Sublime and the Satirical in Wilson 's Poem ' The Foresters . ' " Journal of the Society in the Bibliography of Natural History [British Museum] 6142 @-@ 54 . [The Port Folio]

Rothman , Irving N. (1979) . " An Imitation of Boileau 's Fourth Satire in the American Republic . " Revue de Littérature Comparée 53 (Jan.-March) : 76 @-@ 85 . [The Port Folio]

Rothman , Irving N. (1973) . " John Trumbull 's Parody of Spenser 's Epithalamium , " The Yale University Library Gazette 47 (April) : 193 @-@ 215 . [The Port Folio]

Rothman , Irving N. (2003) . ? Joseph Dennie , a Sceptic , and Philip Freneau , a Celebrant , on

Ballooning in Early America . ? Y2002 Annual Report of the Institute for Space Systems Operations . Houston : ISSO , 118 @-@ 23 . [The Port Folio]
Rothman , Irving N. (1973) . ? Niagara Falls and The Port Folio . ? Aldus [University of Houston] 11 : 242 @-@ 54 . [The Port Folio]
Rothman , Irving N. (1968) . " Structure and Theme in Samuel Ewing 's Satire , the ' American Miracle , ' " American Literature 40 (November) : 294 @-@ 308 . [The Port Folio]
Rothman , Irving N. (1971) . " Two Juvenalian Satires by John Quincy Adams . " Early American Literature 6 : 234 @-@ 51 . [The Port Folio]
Rothman , Irving N. (1967) . Verse Satire in The Port Folio , an Early American Magazine , Edited by Joseph Dennie , 1801 @-@ 1812 . Ph.D. Dissertation , University of Pittsburgh. i @-@ viii , 1 @-@ 220 .