

October 8, 1923

Mr. Louis J. Alber,
2443 Prospect Ave.,
Cleveland, O.

Dear Mr. Alber:

This is an interesting scheme of yours.
I am glad to have the Holbrook folder.

Yes, I will write you one on Lincoln if you are not
in too much of a hurry. When would you have to have the text?

Would I consider writing the history of the lyceum
movement in America? I should find it an interesting task, but
I am afraid I cannot see my way to it. I am gradually getting
notes together for the article of which I wrote you, but it will
be no exhaustive study. I am afraid what you would have in mind
would take altogether more time than I could possibly give; but
you can be sure that if it is done I shall be interested in
having the book.

Very sincerely yours,



MR. JOSIAH HOLBROOK

Founder of the American Lyceum

1826

JOSIAH HOLBROOK—*Founder The American Lyceum*—1826

A Brief Biographical Sketch of Mr. Holbrook



JOSIAH HOLBROOK was born in 1788. He was the son of Col. Daniel Holbrook, of Derby, Conn., a veteran of the Revolutionary war. He was educated in the common schools of Derby, fitted for college under Rev. Amasa Porter; entered Yale 1806, graduating 1810. Opened, about 1819, on his farm, near Derby, one of the first schools in America which sought to teach a popularized form of natural science, and to combine manual labor with education. Boys in this school were allowed to pay a portion of their expenses by laboring on the farm. The American Journal of Education, October, 1826, published a paper by him, setting forth his views on the subject of "Association of Adults for the Purpose of Mutual Education." A few weeks later, at Millbury, Mass., he organized the first lyceum. Mr. Holbrook published, beginning July, 1832, a weekly paper called "The Family Lyceum," which was the first lyceum journal in America. He founded, 1837, the lyceum village of Berea, Ohio. For seventeen years after this event he devoted his life solely to promoting the great enterprise which he had launched in the American lyceum, this work being tragically ended at Lynchburg, Va., where, in 1854, while conducting studies of geological formations, he fell from a cliff into the stream below, his body being found in the stream several days later.

"The main object of interest to Mr. Holbrook's own mind, was the establishment, throughout the United States, of popular associations for diffusion of scientific knowledge connected with the useful arts. The plan and operation of a national system of regularly organized associations, furnished with 'a central heart, conducting arteries and returning veins,' securing the circulation of a vital current of science throughout the country, was the favorite theme of his thoughts and the unceasing aim of his endeavors during the greater part of his life. To bring his views and purposes to actual accomplishment he traveled for successive years

from place to place, founding branches of the American Lyceum, and many of these establishments remain as memorials of his benevolent enterprise, and still wear the designation of 'lyceum,' although the idea of ramifications was never perfectly realized."—Memorial by Prof. William Russell (American Journal of Education, March, 1860).

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With no personal aspirations, no desire for fame, no ambition for individual advancement, and no wish for wealth, he sought only the welfare and happiness of others—the very embodiment of the Spirit of the Lyceum.

JOSIAH HOLBROOK—*Founder The American Lyceum*—1826

A Bit of Early Lyceum History



ACCORDING to "The American Journal of Education," in November, 1826, some forty or fifty farmers and mechanics of the little town of Millbury, Mass., gathered in a hall at the suggestion of Josiah Holbrook of Derby, Conn., a lecturer on the natural sciences, and formed themselves into "The Millbury Branch, Number One, of the American Lyceum." Its purpose as then stated was popular education, self-culture, and community instruction. Mr. Holbrook continued his lecturing, writing, distributing circulars, and traveling about over New England, organizing town lyceums much as representatives have organized chautauqua assemblies. His plan contemplated the formation of County Lyceums attended by delegates from Town Lyceums, State Lyceums, attended by delegates from County Lyceums, a National Lyceum attended by delegates from State Lyceums, and eventually a World Lyceum, of which Chancellor Brougham, of England, should be president, and which should have fifty-two vice-presidents chosen from every country in the world.

Town, County, and State Lyceums were rapidly organized; in 1828 nearly one hundred Town Lyceums had been formed; in 1827 Worcester County, Mass., formed the first County Lyceum. In 1829 there were Lyceums in nearly every state in the Union; in 1834 the high water mark was reached with three thousand Town Lyceums scattered from Boston to Detroit and from Maine to Florida.

On May 4th, 1831, New York City received the first convention for the formation of the National American Lyceum, with one thousand towns being represented. In its resolutions it was declared that "the American Lyceum was organized for ever and ever" (hurrah!) and declared its object to be "the advancement of education, especially in the common schools, and the general diffusion of knowledge."

Annual conventions were held for several years but unfortunately few records are left us, none at all that throw any light on why the National American Lyceum did not continue to meet after 1839.

It was not until in the Sixties that lyceum bureaus were organized to bring order where there was only chaos in the arrangement of the schedules of the speakers. In 1867 the American Literary Bureau of New York was organized by Mr. James K. Medbury to manage the tours of lecturers and in the following year the Boston Lyceum Bureau was organized by James Redpath. Mr. Redpath, who has sometimes been erroneously credited with being the founder of the American Lyceum, was born in 1833, seven years after Mr. Holbrook founded the first Lyceum at Millbury, Mass.

The Lyceum Centennial Celebration in Honor of Josiah Holbrook

The Lyceum Centennial Jubilee



O commemorate the One Hundredth Anniversary of the founding of the Lyceum, the Lyceum Centennial Jubilee Celebration will be held in Boston, Massachusetts, the center of early Lyceum activities and the place where much Lyceum history has been made since the days of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Wendell Phillips. Prominent educators, men of affairs, orators, public men, and lyceum folks will participate, coming from every state in the Union and the provinces of Canada while it is expected that distinguished visitors from abroad will have a prominent part in this Celebration for it commemorates the Centenary of a movement that has become international in scope. It is hoped that every community in America that supports a Lyceum Course or Chautauqua Series will send a delegate. The Celebration will be held in Boston in November, 1926, the exact dates to be announced later.

The Holbrook Lyceum Memorial

One of the interesting features of the Lyceum Centennial Jubilee will be the dedicating of a suitable Memorial that will, in the meantime, be erected in honor of MR. JOSIAH HOLBROOK, who founded the Lyceum in 1826. Funds for the

erection of this memorial are now being raised and any assistance that the reader of this pamphlet may give will be appreciated. Please read the other pages of this folder, if you have not already done so and pass it on to others.

COIT LYCEUM BUREAU

2443 Prospect Ave.

Cleveland, Ohio