

The Judge Brewster letter to Judge Foote
By Douglas H. Shepard, 2015

(Judge) Henry **Brewster** is cited as an anti-slavery activist by the LeRoy Historical Society <http://www.leroyhistoricalsociety.org/>. He also appears as the writer of a three-page letter contained in the anti-slavery collection of [the Foote papers](#). The letter was dated 31 December 1844 and sent from Le Roy Village NY to the “Hon. Judge **Foote**,” who annotated it as follows: “Hon. Henry **Brewster** / of Le Roy NY. – Dec 1844 / antislavery – wants me / to attend a meeting at Perry.”

Brewster (1774-1858) was born in Griswold CT to Simon **Brewster** (*born 1751*) and Mehitable **Belcher Brewster** (*born 1753*). On 8 December 1796, he married Rebecca **Lester** (*born 1777*). Their children were Henry Ayrault **Brewster** (1797-1803), Edward **Brewster** (1799-1891), Albert **Brewster** (1801-1878), Henry Ayrault **Brewster** (1803-1873), Frederick William **Brewster** (1807-1866), and Eliza Mehitable **Brewster** (1817-1864), all born in Le Roy NY. The LeRoy Historical Society’s Underground Railroad brochure notes that an anti-slavery meeting was held in LeRoy in August 1835. “At that time there were four avowed abolitionists in LeRoy: Seth **Gates**, Samuel **Grannis**, Deacon **Comstock** and Judge **Brewster**. They organized the meeting at the Presbyterian Church and advertised that an escaped slave would address the crowd.”

Brewster’s wife Rebecca died in Le Roy in 1839, and he died there in 1858. Both are buried in the Myrtle Street Cemetery. In the following transcription of **Brewster**’s letter, his punctuation may be seen mostly as dashes. The transcriber’s additional punctuation appears in a few places for clarity. Parentheses contain **Brewster**’s own comments; brackets contain the transcriber’s comments or corrections.

“Dear Judge **Foot** [*sic*], My Dear Bro. I have not the happiness of a person[al] acquaintance with you but learn by common fame that you are a brother in the Lord and in the Liberty host – We are to hold a Liberty Convention in Perry – Wyoming County on the 9th Proximo.

“I have a strong desire to meet you there – There will be collected at the Convention Liberty men from – Erie, Niagara, Monroe, Wayne, Ontario, Livingston, Allegany, Genesee Wyoming, Catteraugus [*sic*] – and shall I not say? Chautauque Counties –

“And matters of deep interest will come before the convention, (it will possibly continue for two days). The Countryman Paper (the only Liberty one in Western New York) must be enlarged and placed on high ground – second to none in the State –

“Cannot the Young Lion of the West arise [*sic*] & shake his mane a little? This Paper or rather Press must be located in the right place. And efficient measures taken to spread it all abroad – over all Western New York – to prepare for a rally for Congressmen for the congressional Election in 1846.

“You Sir – as I understand have been a Democrat. I have been a Whig – But I Bless God that we are now Liberty men of the seventy six school – I am over three score years & ten and have the satisfaction to reflect that in Voting fifty years – I have never been left of God to Vote for a slave holder.

“I am very infirm – decreped [*sic*] and fast loosing [*sic*] my memory – I am on the very verge of time, and intend to do all things good I can while I stay here before I go to my heavenly home. I believe the higher we rise in benevolence, here, that we shall start from that point – in our eternal ascent in heaven & Then why not get as high as we can as early?

“Our Jesus tells us to ‘ask, and receive, that our joy may be full.’ And He tells us. He promiss [*sic*] never no, never// no, never/// forsake us. What more do we want? Shall we distrust Him, who shed His blood to clense [*sic*] us from our Sins? This would be base ingratitude!

“No. We will never distrust Him – But we will let Him clense [*sic*] us from all sin, now! That we may be prepared to serve Him & our generation with singleness of purpose – that when we go hence, the world may be better for our having been in it. We will cast all our care upon Him. And go forward.

“I do not know your history in full, you doubtless have done more good on the stage of life than I have – and have more time left, to do good in it than I have. I desire to become personally acquainted with you. And I may never have so good an opportunity as at the proposed Convention –

“You can take your own time to le[ave] home for Buffalo – come to Batavia b[y] Rail Road – and thence to Perry by stage to Leave Batavia Wednesday morning & lodge at Perry, And be rested – ready for action on Thursday the 9th at 10 AM. Leave Perry Saturday morning in my Buggy & return with me to Le Roy 19 mi[les]. Spend the Sabbath with me – go to my meeting, here [*sic*] the pure Gospel of Jesus preached – Talk on Sabbath Evening upon Liberty to a full house.

“I will guarantee you a house – and a full house – We have a large number of Democrats – men of intellect, but who abuse it, politically – And whigs ditto, ditto. And when you wish to leave for home – sweet Home – I will take you to Batavia in my Bu[ggy] 110 miles. And thence you can return as you came min[us] a little money for traveling expenses. And some ditto to set forward the Liberty Press affair – Now will you not come?

“I trust you will – I shall expect to meet you at Perry on Wednesday morning the 8th of Jany. next, if God permit – And to have you follow out the track I have sketched out, in all its particulars [*sic*], And return home after 8 or 10 days absence well pleased with the numerous acquaintances you have formed. And the good you have done in a good cause – And a healthy & stronger man to do good.

“Good, well tempered steel always grows brighter by good usage. ‘There is that scattereth, and yet, increaseth, And there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.’ I presume your experience & observation will lead you to say, this is truth.

“But I will return to the Convention – We want Council and Cash at the Convention – And I trust you will – if consistant [*sic*] with health and engagements say – ‘I will cast in my lot among them – we will all have one purse.’ And I trust if Solomon should know it your determination – he would not upbraid you for it – I trust we shall have a ‘Gidions [*sic*] Army’ – And more than a Penny Victory –

“Excuse my familiarity with a stranger, But I do not feel as though we were strangers altho we have not seen each other – But farewell until we meet – I have written in haste – I have written about ten circulars today – but not each as long as this – Shall I see you at the time & place as aforesaid – I shall expect it –

“Most Respectfully Your Bro & Fellow Labourer [*sic*] for the Truth for Liberty & the Right,
Henry **Brewster**. P.S. Can you not get some good men & true, to accompany you?”