Elbridge Gerry.

The son of Thomas Gerry, a native of Newton, England, but  
emigrated to this country in 1730, was born at Marblehead,  
Massachusetts, the 17th of July 1744. He entered Harvard college  
before he was fourteen years of age, & graduated there in 1762.  
He was at first destined to the profession of medicine, to which  
he was strongly attached; but soon after he left college he engaged  
in the same business his father followed & at his request, that of a  
merchant; & for sometime attended the routine of mercantile pur=  
=suits in his native town. The knowlege he acquired of commerce & the  
modes of transacting that branch of business was useful to him in future  
life.  
[July 7, 1831]

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Elbridge Gerry.  
The strong political excitements of the times attracted his  
attention from the compting house, tho for the time he was successful,  
& terminated his connection with commerce, to which he had little  
partiality. In the intervals of public employment he did indeed  
resume the avocation, but as might be expected, when not steadily  
pursued with no great satisfaction or advantage; & after a few  
years he finally abandoned it for other objects more congenial to  
his mind.

He made his first appearance in public life as a represen=  
=tative of his native town in May 1772-a period when the  
royal government & people were in a high state of acrimony &  
almost open collision. The next year he was re-elected, & tho one of  
the youngest members, was appointed a member of the standing  
committee of correspondence & enquiry with the other colonies; &  
of the committee to prepare an address to the provinces. He was  
distinguished for his zeal & firmness in support of the rights of his  
country. His spirit was nourished by close communion with the  
Adamses, the Hancocks, & the Warrens of those days. He entered early,  
from principle, in opposition to British encroachments, & continued  
one of the most uniform republicans to the end of the contest. During  
the revolution, beside his own personal exertions, which were unre=  
=mitted & indefatigable, he did not hesitate, in many cases, to advance  
his own funds, when immediate payment was required, & to  
incur responsibities on his own credit, which the government was  
then unable to redeem, & which in fact, occassioned him in the end  
heavy pecuniary losses.

In 1774, in consequence of difficulties which arose in Marblehead on  
account of the small pox, he declined a re-election to the legislature.  
But in October he was elected member of an assembly which met at  
Salem, & adjourned to Concord, where they assumed the form of a legisla=  
=tive assembly under the name of the provincial congress.  
In 1775 he was a member of the provincial congress of Massachusetts  
which virtually destroyed the royal authority in that province. He was  
chairman of the committee of supplies to provide ammunition & pro=  
=visions, & to deposit them in some place of safety for future use. This  
trust he executed with great punctuality & unwearied industry. On the  
18th of April the British troops on their march to Lexington, in the middle  
of the night, passed the house in which the committee held their ses=  
=sion. After the foremost of the troops passed, Gerry from his bed saw  
a portion of them preparing to surround the house, he sprang from  
his bed, & half dressed escaped undiscovered & concealed himself in a  
cornfield, till the troops entered & searched the house & bed chambers, and  
joined the main body & marched off; Gerry then returned, & tho his  
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Elbridge Gerry.  
bed had been rumpled, he found his clothing & watch safe.  
Being ardent & persevering in his measures to oppose the public  
enemy, early in November he proposed that the provincial congress  
should raise a committee upon the subject of fitting out armed  
vessels & establishing a court for the trial & condemnation of assizes.  
The committee was appointed, a bill reported, & passed; & soon after the  
council appointed him, under the authority of that Act, maritime judge  
for the counties of Suffolk, Middlesex, & Essex; but thinking he could  
be more useful as a legislator & preferring it to that of a judge,  
he declined the appointment.

On the 18th of January 1776 he was elected a delegate to the general  
congress, & on the 9th of February following took his seat, & continued  
such under other elections till the 5th of July 1780. As a delegate he was  
constantly attentive, active, industrious, exact, & tenacious of public &  
private honor, & rendered great service to the nation. He was a zealous  
& able advocate for the independence of this country, & signed the declara=  
=tion of it. From his first entrance into congress, till the organization  
of the treasury board in 1780, he continued to be a member, & generally  
chairman of the committee of the treasury. In his capacity of presiding  
officer of the board of the treasury, he rendered himself particularly  
invidious to general Arnold, whose extravagant accounts he rejected  
with a spirit which deserves admiration, as Arnold was then known  
only as a gallant soldier, whose skill & courage had been conspicu=  
=ously exerted for his country, & the liberality with which such talents &  
activity were then promptly rewarded, inclined men to a favorable  
consideration of his claim. To Arnold's abusive appeal to congress,  
for he appealed there, Mr Gerry replied, and after exhibiting with great  
calmness the reasons of his decisions on his accounts, concluded with  
a severe reprehension of the conduct of his assailant. "If," said he,  
"the faithful discharge of our official duty, unpleasant enough in  
itself, is to bring with it the liability of personal attack of men who  
have neither honesty in their public dealings nor curtesy in private  
life, it might be well to abolish all guards on the treasury, & admit  
rapacity & crime to help themselves at pleasure." This was intrepid lan=  
=guage at the period, & must be sound doctrine at all times.

On the 14th of January 1778, in a letter to a friend, he says, "I am worn  
down with fatigue, & have been waiting with some impatience to return  
to Massachusetts; but I have wished to see certain measures accomplished  
before I left congress; when those were finished, others presented themselves  
equally important & I waited for them, & so on; but this mode of travelling  
will never get me home. I must therefore determine at all events to leave  
this place in the spring." The 24th of April he says, "I wish to see a return of  
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Elbridge Gerry.  
some of my colleagues, in order to obtain such relaxation from business,  
as at length has become indispenably necessary for preserving my health.  
Two years constant attention to the business of congress & the board of  
the treasury, the members of which have been unequal in number to the  
duties required, with opportunity for very little exercise, is  
rather hazardous to the constitution, & I feel the effects of it." The  
26th of May he says, "I had before this thot to have set off for Massa=  
chusetts, but have not been able to break away from the incessant la=  
=bors which occupy me day & night much of this time & close application  
was devoted to forming & vindicating the articles of confederation between  
the States." Near the close of 1779 he was appointed at the head of the com=  
=mittee chosen by Massachusetts to meet delegates from other states  
at Philadelphia, to devise a corrective for the deplorable state of the  
paper currency.

On the 19th of February 1780, upon the question of proportioning sup=  
=plies to be furnished by the several states & the value of them,  he moved  
that the prices should conform to those agreed upon by a convention  
previously held at New Haven. This motion was objected to as being  
out of order; on the question of order, he requested the yeas & nays, but congress  
refused to record them. This course he considered improper & injurious  
to Massachusetts, who he thot was required to contribute more then her equal  
proportion to the common cause. He therefore on the 5th July left congress  
where he had devoted, without recess or intermission four years & a half to  
his official labors for which he received about four thousand dollars specie  
value.

Soon after his return to Massachusetts, he made his complaint to their  
general assembly; the house approved of his conduct, & voted to sustain his  
complaint but the council probably thinking the opinion expressed by the  
popular branch would answer all the purposes proposed by the measure  
let the resolve lie on the table. This course did not satisfy Mr Gerry. In  
November he was re-elected delegate to congress, but declined the appoint=  
=ment, assigning as a reason that the rights & prerogatives of the state had  
been invaded in his person, & no redress had on his own application, & no  
demand had been made by his constituents. The court resolved that they  
approved of the high sense which he had of his right of priviledge, and  
instructed their delegates to make such representation to congress as the im=  
=portance of the subject required. Their delegates accordingly presented a  
remonstrance & protest against the proceedings of congress, which was  
placed in their files. Tho Mr Gerry was absent, congress appointed him a  
member of the committee to visit the army.

On the 31st of January 1781 he was elected a member of the American  
Academy of Arts & Sciences. In October he was elected a representative  
by the inhabitants of Marblehead, & a senator by the county of Essex, to  
the Massachusetts legitature. The office of senator he declined, but that  
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Elbridge Gerry  
of representative he accepted. In April 1782 he was again elected  
senator, but again declined the office.

The 21st of June 1781 he was again elected a delegate to the congress of the  
United States; but the controversy which induced him to leave congress the  
preceeding year not being settled, nor such measures adopted by the  
State in relation to it as he thot satisfactory, he formally declined the  
appointment; but the legislature did not accept his decline. In June 1782  
the legislature re-appointed him delegate to congress; & in June 1783 they  
again re-appointed him. Yielding to the solicitations of personal & political  
friends, & satisfied at length with the measures which had been ta=  
=ken on his remonstrance, he resumed his seat in congress on the  
third of November following, where he remained till some time in  
September 1785, when he closed his career in the old congress. It is said  
that at the age of less than forty two years he had been longer a mem=  
=ber of congress than any other man in it. He was opposed to the society  
of Cincinnati-he considered it too aristocratical for our institutions,  
& as having a tendency to introduce an order of nobility into the country.  
He preserved his habits of industry, & close attention to every subject  
that was moved in congress; he transcribed with his own hands their  
public & private proceedings during every day of his attendance. Congress  
appointed him one of the commissioners to settle with the contractors  
of the army; but he declined the appointment.

Before he left congress, but after he was more than forty years old, he  
married a daughter of James Thompson of New York. By her he had  
a numerous family of children. She, and three sons, & six daughters  
survived him.

In May 1785 he was elected a member of the Senate of Masachusetts,  
but declined the office; observing he was elected a representative, which  
he intended to accept as soon as his term of delegate to congress should  
expire.

In 1786 he was appointed by the legislature of Massachusetts one of their  
delegates to meet delegates from the other States at Annapolis the first of  
September, to consider the commerce of the United States, & how far a  
uniform system of commercial regulations was necessary, & to report a  
bill upon the subject to congress. The delegates from Massachusetts con=  
=sidered the plan too limited & inefficient for the purpose, & severally declined  
the appointments. At the meeting only five States attended at Annapolis;  
& nothing was done, except recommending the States to appoint a convention  
to meet the next year at Philadelphia.

The general court of Masachusetts appointed him a delegate to the con=  
=vention, which met at Philadelphia & formed the constitution of the United  
States. On the 29th of May 1787 he attended & took part in the business and  
debates of that assembly; but having arrived at the conclusion in his own mind  
that it did not comport with the well being of the country, with regret. but  
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Elbridge Gerry.  
without hesitation, he declined signing the constitution. In his letter  
of the 18th of October following to the president of the Senate & speaker of  
the house of representatives of Massachusetts, he stated his objections  
to the constitution in a frank & candid manner, addressed to their  
understanding, not their passions. "My principal objections," he says,  
"to the plan are, there is no adequate provision for a representation  
of the people; that they have no security for the right of election; that  
some of the legislature are ambiguous, & others indefinite & dangerous,  
that the executive is blended with, & will have an undue influ=  
=ence over, the legislature; that the judicial departments will be  
oppressive; that treaties of the highest importance may be formed by  
the president with the advice of two thirds of a quorum of the Senate;  
& that the system is without the security of a bill of rights." But  
in the conclusion he says, "I shall only add, that as the public  
welfare requires a better constitution than the confederation, I  
shall think it my duty, as a citizen of Massachusetts, to support  
that which shall be finally adopted, sincerely hoping it will  
secure the liberty & happiness of America."

The convention of Massachusetts, which met the 9th of January 1788,  
to decide the question whether they would ratify the constitution, on  
the 14th of that month voted that Mr Gerry "be requested to take a  
seat in the convention, to answer any questions of fact from time  
to time, that the convention may ask, respecting the passing of the  
constitution;" & appointed a committee to request him to attend, & he  
attended accordingly. On the 18th the convention voted that his an=  
=swers should be in writing; with which he complied. On the 22d he  
wrote a long letter to the convention respecting the constitution; to  
which objections & some pointed remarks were made; & no further  
communications appear to have been made by him. His opposition  
to the constitution exposed him to the censure of many of his former  
political friends, & to much abuse in the journals of the day. He felt  
severely the revulsion of public opinion, & the loss of popularity.  
At the first election of representatives to congress under that consti=  
=tution, he was brot forward as a candidate; but at the first meetings  
in Middlesex there was no choice, & previous to the second his friends  
again named him. He then published, under his own signature, a  
manly address to the electors, requesting such of them as were dispo=  
=sed to vote for him to turn their attention to some other candidate ex=  
=plicitly declaring that an election would by no means be agreeable to him.  
After mentioning the unjust accusations & abuse which had been  
heaped upon him, for acting according to his own judgment re=  
=specting the constitution of the United States, he says, "Some  
have endeavored to represent me as an enemy to the   
constitution; than which nothing is more remote from truth  
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14.  
Elbridge Gerry  
1814.  
Since the commencement of the revolution, I have been solicitious  
for an efficient federal government, conceiving that without it we  
must be a divided & unhappy people. A government too democratical  
I have deprecated; but wished for one that possessed powers sufficient  
for the welfare of the union, & at the same time so balanced as to se=  
=cure the governed from the rapacity & domination of lawless & insolent  
ambition. To an unconstitutional ratification I was therefore opposed,  
because thereby every necessary amendment would be precarious.  
But as the system is adopted, I am clearly of opinion that every citi=  
=zen of the ratifying States is in duty bound to support it, & that an  
opposition to a due administration of it would not only be unjustifiable  
but highly criminal.

"Amendments every citizen has a right to urge without enciting a  
spirit of prosecution, which is unnecessary in a good cause, & never gains  
proselytes in a bad one. Every friend of a vigorous government, as I  
conceive, must be desirous of such amendments as will remove the  
just apprehensions of the people, & secure their confidence & affection. To  
defeat amendments of this description, must be in effect to defeat the  
constitution itself. When the question on amendments shall have  
received a constitutional decision; I shall cheerfully acquiese, & in any  
event, shall be happy to promote the interests of the respectable county  
of Middlesex, of this commonwealth, & of the United States.  
"The part, which I have had to act, & the uncandid treatment, & the  
which I have received in this matter will, I trust, justify me in being  
thus explicit, for I am conscious that every part of my political conduct  
has had for its object, the public welfare."

At the second meeting he was elected by a small majority. In his letter of  
acceptance to the governor he says. "I am deeply impressed with the  
honorable testimony of the electors of Middlesex, after I had repeatedly  
informed them of my declining the appointments. This however has placed  
me in a situation, which of all others I wished to avoid; being thereby  
reduced to the disagreeable alternative of disappointing my fellow  
citizens; who have conferred on me their suffrages, or of filling a place,  
which the most cogent reasons had urged me to decline. Under these  
circumstances, in the critical state of public affairs, I have preferred  
the latter, being determined to sacrifice every personal consideration,  
to the acceptance of the office; that desirous as I am of the establishment  
of a federal government, no act of mine may have the least appearance  
of impeding it." To his confidential friends he wrote on this subject in  
the same strain; & there is not the slightert reason to doubt the  
truth & sincerty of his declaration.

On the 8th of April 1789 he took his seat in congress. When some  
of the members were for considering the subject of amendements.  
before they had passed the laws necessary to carry the new  
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government into full effect, he opposed that object. In the course of  
debate he said, "I am of opinion that we should dispatch the important  
subjects now on the table, & reserve the great questions concerning the  
constitution; to a period of tranquility & leisure. It is indeed a mo=  
=mentuos subject, & very near my heart, & I shall be glad to set  
about it as speedily as possible; but I would not stay the operation of  
government on that account. I think our political ship should first be  
got under way, & that she be not suffered to rot at the wharf, till she  
beats off her rudder, or runs a wreck on the shore. I wish an early  
day may be assigned for the consideration of amendments, to prevent the  
necessity, which the States may feel themselves under of calling a new con=  
=vention. I am not one of those facinated admirers of the system who  
consider it all perfection; I am not so blind or so uncandid, that I  
cannot see, or will not acknowlege it has beauties. It partakes of hu=  
=manity; there is blended in it virtue & vice, excellence & error. If it  
is referred to a new convention, we risk some of its best properties.  
My opinion was openly given, that it ought not to have been ratified  
without amendments, but as the matter now stands, I am firmly of  
opinion that the salvation of America depends on the establishment  
of this government, whether amended or not. If this constitution, which  
is now ratified, be not supported, I despair of ever having a government  
for these United States."

In 1791 he was re-elected a representative to congress, & held the office  
till the 3d of March 1793. Having served four years, he declined a  
re-election.

In the years 1796 & 1804 he was chosen an elector of president & vice presi=  
=dent of the United States.

On the 22d of June 1797 he was appointed envoy extraordinary jointly with  
Pinkney & Marshall to France. Nothing could have been more unexpected  
to him than this appointment, which he reluctantly accepted; & on the  
9th of August following embarked for that country. On the 4th October  
the thee envoys met in Paris, & the next day announced then arrival  
to Talleyrand the minister of foreign affairs, & requested an opportunity  
to present their letters of evidence. Three days after they had an interview  
with the minister, delivered the letters of evidence, & received cards of hos=  
=pitality. In a day or two the private & confidential secretary of the mi=  
=nister intimated to the secretary of one of the envoys, that some part  
of the president's speech to congress required an explanation; & that the  
envoys would not probably have an audience tell the negotiation was  
finished. Anonymous persons, afterwards designated by X.Y.&Z, called  
upon the envoys, & proposed that they should give a softening turn to the  
presidents speech; make a loan of some millions of money to the French  
treasury & a gratuity of fifty thousand pounds sterling to certain high officers of  
government, for distribution to prominent individuals. The envoys promptly  
resolved they would not purchase the right of negotiation. It was intimated  
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to Mr Gerry thot Talleyrand expected to have seen the American envoy  
& to have conferred with them individually on the affairs of the mission.  
Gerry communicated the fact to Pinkney & Marshall; they advised him to  
call, but declined going themselves. He reluctantly consented, & had several  
interviews with Tallyrand, at which they occasionally discussed the  
relations of the United States & France.

After waiting thirty days, one of the envoys proposed to address the mi=  
=nister in an official note, requesting his attention to their situation,  
& demanding that measures should be taken to open the negotiation.  
Mr Gerry was of opinion it would be useless; but signed with the other  
envoys a letter to the minister. To this letter no answer was returned;  
but they were given to understand it was laid before the executive  
directory, who would command their minister what steps to pursue.  
Talleyrand informed Mr Gerry that no treaty would be made with  
the envoys, without an apology for the presidents speech, or an equa=  
= valent; but that a voluntary offer of a loan would be accepted as  
an equavalent. In consequence of Gerry's visit to Talleyrand, the latter  
invited the former to one of his customary dinners, & Mr Gerry afterwards  
returned the civility; but his separation from his colleagues was  
so unpleasant, that with a single exception he afterwards declined  
all personal attention to Talleyrand. All three of the envoys signed  
a report to the government of the United States, that there was no prospect  
of effecting the object of their mission, without the payment of a large  
sum of money.

On the 4th of February 1798, Talleyrand invited Mr Gerry to call upon  
him; at their meeting Talleyrand, after enjoining profound secrecy, informed  
Gerry that the directory had determined not to treat with Pinkney & Marshall  
but were willing to commence negotiations with him. On the 27th  
of that month the envoys demanded of Tallyrand an audience; & on  
the 2d & 6th of March were admitted. He insisted on a loan. Pinkney and  
Marshall were decidedly against it; but Gerry appeared, at the conferences,  
silent on the subject. But when the envoys were together by themselves,  
Gerry stated his opinion, that he thot a loan preferable to a war, & was  
therefore willing to open negotiation upon the basis of a loan, & when  
a treaty was formed not agree to it without the sanction of our govern=  
=ment; but the other two envoys met the proposition with an un=  
=qualified negative. On the 18th of that month Talleyrand in an official  
letter to the envoys avows the opinion that the directory will not treat  
with the three envoys, but with one of them. The envoys not being accredited,  
but exposed to personal & official mortifications of a humiliating kind,  
 requested that letters of safe post should be granted to them individually  
or to such as they pleased. Letters were accordingly granted to Pinkney  
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& Marshall, but not to Gerry; & the two former soon after embarked  
for the United States.

On the 3d of April Talleyrand wrote Gerry that he believed the other two  
envoys had withdrawn from the French territories, & expressed a desire  
to resume communications with him upon the interests of France &  
the United States. The next day Gerry informed him that as an indi=  
=vidual he would confer, but the commission being jointly to three  
envoys, as a minister he had no authority. On the 20th he wrote Talley=  
=rand, That as his colleagues from necessity had left Paris; to prevent a  
rupture between the two nations he had consented to remain; but  
his conferences must be informal-& that he should communicate them  
to his government, but without official authority. Talleyrand abandoned  
the demand of a loan, & the explanation of the president's speech; and  
announced the willingness of the government to give Mr Gerry a public  
reception.

On the 3d of May Mr Gerry in a letter to Mr King says, "I cannot say  
what will be the opinion of the president, or of his constitutients, re=  
­=specting my conduct in remaining here, but I will do nothing that  
I cannot justify to my own mind, & which I am not clearly convinced  
ought to merit their approbation. I have no personal views in re=  
=maining, & the moment I can reconcile this government to my  
departure, I shall embark for the United States."

The circumstance of his remaining in France after the other envoys  
had left it, & the apprehension that he would do something that would  
compromit the honor or interest of our country, excited the people to  
censure him with great severity. To a gentleman who had forwarded  
to him, by express, the dispatches published in the United States, advising  
him to withdraw from France before their contents were made known  
& urging the danger of his situation, he writes, "I have received your  
letter with copies of the dispatches enclosed. The prospect of a ten year's  
imprisonment would not induce me to quit this country as a fugitive."  
In his conferences with Talleyrand he displayed tatents, information,  
industry, prudence, & uncompromising integrity. On the eve of hostilities  
between the two nations his zeal, his penetration, & cool perseverance,  
laid the foundation for an accomodation. The minister having given  
him a positive assurance of the reception of another minister, with the  
respect due to the nation he should represent, he on the 10th of June de=  
=manded his pass-ports; but the government of France, under various pre=  
=tents, delayed it till the 26th of July, when he left Paris for Havre.  
There he received an arrete from the French government restraining  
the irregular & vexatious conduct of privateers in the West Indian Seas  
& assurances given that all other anangements should conform to the  
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just expectations of the United States. The benefits which Mr Gerry  
considered as resulting from his residence in that country was, an express  
renunciation on the part of France of loans; of reparation for the presi=  
=sidents speech; a renuniciation of a demand for the United States to  
assume debts due her citizens; a disclaimer of any desire that we  
should dissolve the British treaty; an admission of our claim for captures  
on the want of a role d'equipage; advances towards a new negotia=  
=tion; & the actual preservation of peace.

On the first day of October he arrived at Boston; & on the 18th of  
that month in a letter to the secretary of State, giving an account of  
his mission says\_ "I was informed that an immediate rupture  
would be the result of my departure from France; & the same com=  
=munication being again made, with information, that if I was  
determined not to negotiate seperately, this government would be  
satisfied with my residence here, untill the government of the United  
States could take their measures. I consented to this from public con=  
=siderations solely; for every private one was opposed to it. In my  
embarrassed situation, not losing sight of the great object of our  
mission, a reconciliation with this powerful republic. I have taken  
a position, by which I meant to ascertain, if possible, without com=  
­=promitting the government of the United States, or myself, the ulti=­  
=timate views of France with respect to them. It would have  
been impossible for me under existing circumstances to have consented  
to a seperate negotiation, had the provision been made in our powers  
& instructions: for two of my colleagues, one from the southern, & the  
other from the middle states, having been sent back, I could have had  
no prospect of forming a treaty, which would have given general  
satisfaction to my country; & I could never undertaken any nego=  
=ciation, without that prospect. It is therefore incumbent on me to  
declare, that should the result of my endeavors present to our govern=  
­=ment more pleasing prospects, it is nevertheless, my firm determi=  
=nation to proceed no further in this negotiation."

Tho the mission was very unpleasant to each of the envoys, it was  
useful to the United States-it opened a way for the termination of  
hostile feelings, & the preservation of the peace & honor of our country. Pre=  
=sident Adams, the elder, some years after says, Mr Gerry "finally  
saved the peace of the nation, for he alone discovered & furnished evi=  
=dence that X.Y &Z. were employed by Talleyrand; & he alone  
brot home the direct, formal, & official assuran=  
=ces upon which the subsequent commission proceeded & peace made."  
After his return from France a number of his friends were desirous  
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that he should be candidate for representative to congress; but  
he positively declined it. In April 1800 & 1801 he was supported  
as candidate for governor of Massachusetts, but the opposing can=  
=didate succeeded by a small majority: in the last of those years  
of 45,816 votes Gerry had 20,169.

He spent his time at his farm in Cambridge in philosophical  
retirement, attending to his favorite pursuits, the education of his  
children, & the cultivation of his land. But in his retirement he  
was unfortunate. A friend for whom he had become surety  
for a large amount, failed, & left him with a weight of pecuniary  
obligation, from which he was never able to extricate himself.  
Indeed, at his discease he left to his family only his example and  
his fame.

Immediately after the attack made in 1808 by the British ship  
Leopard upon the American frigate Chesapeake, there was a great  
meeting held in Boston on the occasion. Mr Gerry being there,  
but not in the assembly, was appointed presiding officer. After  
being conducted to the chair, he observed "I had not anticipated  
that at my time of life, there could have been a scene like of  
the present, but I yield to the call that is made on me, as I hold  
it to be the duty of every citizen, tho he may not have but one day  
to live, to devote that day to his country.

In August 1810 Harvard college conferred on him the degree of doctor  
of laws; the people, in the preceeding April, having elected him governor  
of Massachusetts, on the duties of which he entered the 2d of June. In  
appointments to office, he respected the claims of his political friends  
whom he found to have been heretofore almost entirely excluded;  
but of the incumbents holding their place at the will of the exe=  
=cutive, no one was disturbed in the enjoyment of his situation.  
A strong effort was made by influential individuals to change the  
governor's policy in this respect, & there were not wanting those  
who expressed their dissatisfaction at the tolerance he was disposed  
to observe. But their disapprobation was without effect: his policy  
was to effect a conciliation between the people & the administration  
of the government of the United States.

In April 1811 he was re-elected governor. The opposition of the fede=­  
=ralists of Massachusetts, to the administration of the government  
of the Unted States, had become not only active but violent. The go=  
=vemor in his speech, of the 7th of June, to the legislature, speaking  
of the appointments he had made, says, "To diminish, & if possible to  
exterminate party spirit, the executive of this commonwealth, during  
[July 13, 1836]

1814  
Elbridge Gerry.  
in the last year, has confirmed in his place, or re-appointed within  
 or requisite, every state officer under his control, who has been correct in  
his conduct, & faithful to his trust; disregarding his polities, & requir=  
­=ing only his support of the federal & state constitutions, govern=  
=ments & laws, with a due regard to the rights of officers and  
individuals subject to his official discretion. But it cannot  
be expected of any executive, so far to disregard the sound obli=  
=gations of duty & honor, as to preserve in official stations such  
individuals as would abuse the influence of their public characters,  
by sanctioning resistance to laws, or by such other conduct as will  
beguile peaceable & happy citizens into a state of civil warfare.  
In all the branches of the government the republicans had a de=  
=cided majority, & to aid their partizans passed laws removing she=  
=riffs & clerks of court from office, & requiring the governor and  
council to appoint men to fill those offices. Impelled by the  
considerations mentioned in his speech & the zeal of his partizans,  
he turned out some men from office & appointed some others, which  
if left to the unbiased exercise of his own judgment it is proba=  
­=ble he would not have done.

On the 25th of April 1812, in compliance with a requisition from  
the government of the United States, he promptly issued orders to the  
militia officers to detach ten thousand men to be organized and  
ready to march at a moments warning for the defence of the coun=  
=try. In a private letter of that date he says, "We have been long  
enough at peace; we are loosing our spirit, our character, & our  
independence. We are degenerating into a mere nation of traders,  
& are forgetting the honor of our ancestors, & the interest of poste=  
=rity. We must be roused by some great event that may stir up  
the ancient spirit of the people. Policy has kept us quiet till it  
ceases to be policy. Weakness & exhaustion prevented us from noble  
daring, & it was wise in us to temporize untill we gained strength  
& vigor. We have now grown to manhood, & it will be shameful in  
the man to bear what the child might submit to without dishonor."  
At the April election this year for governor, of 104,156 votes he had  
51,326, but the opposing federal candidate was elected by a majority  
of 1,370.

He possessed a sagacity, a fortitude, an inflexibility, & an indefatigable  
application which few men can equal. Forming his opinions with  
deliberation, he yielded them with reluctance. Feeling the conviction  
arising from thorough investigation, it was not easy to change his results.  
[July 13, 1831]

1814  
Elbridge Gerry.  
The tenacity with which he clung to such sentiments as his judgment  
approved was at times too determined, & probably obstinate. This tendency  
was increased by another, which was the weakest trait of his mind.  
He was habitually suspicious, & this habit increased as he advanced  
in years. There was little in such a state of mind of the art of acquiring  
popularity, & still less in letting it be seen. They who were associated  
with him were often oppressed with a conviction that he was doubtful  
of their sincerity, & this feeling on their part, generated a state of things  
which otherwise would not have existed. It is something anomalous  
in the history of character, that an individual punctiliiously upright  
in his own conduct, should entertain so many doubts of the sincerity  
of others.

In religion he was a liberal episcopalian-willing that those who  
differed from him should conform to their own opinions. In his temper  
he was naturally ardent & impetuous; but subjected his passions to the  
dictates of his judgment. Belonging to that school of manners, which  
commenced under the royal government, & perfected its pupils in the  
camp & cabinet of the revolution, regulating the deportment with  
curtesy towards others, & a personal dignity that never lost its self=  
respect, lofty without arrogance, affable without familiarity, he  
was at all times & under all circumstances, entitled to the character of  
a real gentleman.

On the 8th of June 1812, at a meeting of severty six members of congress,  
all but two of them voted to nominate him as a candidate for vice  
president of the United States; & a committee immediately wrote him reque=  
=ting his consent. In his letter to them, of the 11th he consented, observing  
"That in a republic, the service of each citizen is due to the state, even  
in profound peace, & much more so when the nation stands on the  
threshold of war." On the first wednerday of December of 217 electoral votes  
he had 131, & was elected; & on the 4th March 1813 took the oath of office  
at his own house. He was a zealous, firm, effective supporter of the war  
to it he devoted his time & all the energies of his mind. The  
24th of May, the first day of the session, he took his seat as presiding officer in the Senate of  
the United States, & continued till the senate adjourned on the 2d of  
August. As a presiding officer he was not distinguished; but he rendered  
great service in supporting the government & the rights of the nation.  
During his residence at Washington, the private letter he received from  
his friends, & from applicants for office, were numerous. The mere read=  
=ing was fatiguing & oppressive, & often deprived him of both  
rest & exercise. He politely answered as many of them as he was able.  
[July 13, 1831]

1814  
Elbridge Gerry.  
There was a town in Massachusetts incorporated by his name  
but in 1814 the town petitioned legislature to change its name  
to Phillipstown, alledging that Gerry while chief magistrate had  
rendered "the name itself a term of odium & reproach," "& requesting  
that it might no longer bear his hateful name." That a town should  
use such virulent language against a man strictly honest & the  
second officer in the government of the nation, & that the legislature  
should so far approve of it as to grant their request, can be imputed  
only to the blindness & madness of party spirit, which then prevailed  
in both. Such proceedings reflect more distance on the petitioners & the  
legislature, than reproach on Mr Gerry.

Mr Gerry attended the second & third sessions of the Senate; and

on the 22nd of November 1814 provided during the whole of a long debate, with his  
usual spirit, & in the enjoyment of accustomed health. On returning  
to his lodgings he complained of slight indisposition, but amused  
himself thro the evening in arranging the letters of the day, & in a  
cheerful conversation with the immates of the house. He conversed  
about his family in Massachusetts, & taking from his bosom a minia=  
=ture, which was always suspended round his neck when the  
original was absent, & had hitherto, with a peculiar delicacy of  
feeling, been his own personal secret, he spoke of it with an in=  
=terest which shew that altho the surpassing beauty delineated  
on the picture might have first charmed the imagination, more  
enduring qualities had left the impress of affection on his heart.  
He rested well thro the night, & breakfasted as usual with the fa=  
=mily on the morning of the 23rd, & altho he spoke of some vague  
indications of disease, he did not consider them sufficient to prevent  
his taking his seat in the Senate, at the hour in which it was to  
meet. The carriage coming to cany him to the capitol rather earlier  
than usual, he directed the coachman on his way there, to stop at the  
office of the register of the treasury, at which he had some business that  
required his attention. This being arranged he returned to his carriage,  
& had proceeded but a short distance, when a sudden extravasation  
of blood took place upon the lungs, & terminated his life in twenty  
minutes, almost without a struggle, & apparently without pain, in the  
seventy first year of his age.

The next day he was buried, under the direction of a committee of  
the Senate, in the city of Washington. Congress afterwards erected a  
monument of white marble over his remains, with the following in=  
=scription. "The tomb of Elbridge Gerry. vice president of the United  
[July 13, 1831]

1814  
Elbridge Gerry.  
States, who died suddenly in this city, November 23, 1814, on his way  
to the capitol as president of the Senate, aged seventy years. Thus  
fulfilling his own memorable injunction. It is the duty of every  
man, tho he may have but one day to live, to devote that day to the  
good of his country.