

= Elbridge Gerry =

Elbridge Thomas Gerry ( / ˈɛlbrɪdʒ ˈɡɛri / ; July 17 , 1744 ( O.S. July 6 , 1744 ) ? November 23 , 1814 ) was an American statesman and diplomat . As a Democratic @-@ Republican he was selected as the fifth Vice President of the United States ( 1813 ? 14 ) , serving under James Madison . He is known best for being the namesake of gerrymandering , a process by which electoral districts are drawn with the aim of aiding the party in power , although its initial " g " has softened to / dʒ / from the hard / ɡ / of his name .

Born into a wealthy merchant family , Gerry vocally opposed British colonial policy in the 1760s , and was active in the early stages of organizing the resistance in the American Revolutionary War . Elected to the Second Continental Congress , Gerry signed both the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation . He was one of three men who attended the Constitutional Convention in 1787 but refused to sign the United States Constitution because it did not then include a Bill of Rights . After its ratification he was elected to the inaugural United States Congress , where he was actively involved in drafting and passage of the Bill of Rights as an advocate of individual and state liberties .

Gerry was at first opposed to the idea of political parties , and cultivated enduring friendships on both sides of the political divide between Federalists and Democratic @-@ Republicans . He was a member of a diplomatic delegation to France that was treated poorly in the XYZ Affair , in which Federalists held him responsible for the breakdown in negotiations . Gerry thereafter became a Democratic @-@ Republican , running unsuccessfully for Governor of Massachusetts several times before winning the office in 1810 . During his second term , the legislature approved new state senate districts that led to the coining of the word " gerrymander " ; he lost the next election , although the state senate remained Republican . Chosen by Madison as his vice presidential candidate in 1812 , Gerry was elected , but died a year and a half into his term . He is the only signer of the Declaration of Independence who is buried in Washington , D.C.

= = Early life = =

Elbridge Gerry was born on July 17 , 1744 , in Marblehead , Massachusetts . His father , Thomas Gerry , was a merchant operating ships out of Marblehead , and his mother , Elizabeth ( Greenleaf ) Gerry , was the daughter of a successful Boston merchant . Gerry 's first name came from John Elbridge , one of his mother 's ancestors . Gerry 's parents had eleven children in all , although only five survived to adulthood . Of these , Elbridge was the third . He was first educated by private tutors , and entered Harvard College shortly before turning fourteen . After receiving a B.A. in 1762 and an M.A. in 1765 , he entered his father 's merchant business . By the 1770s the Gerrys numbered among the wealthiest Massachusetts merchants , with trading connections in Spain , the West Indies , and along the North American coast . Gerry 's father , who had migrated from England in 1730 , was active in local politics and had a leading role in the local militia .

= = Early political career = =

Gerry was from an early time a vocal opponent of Parliamentary efforts to tax the colonies after the French and Indian War ended in 1763 . In 1770 he sat on a Marblehead committee that sought to enforce importation bans on taxed British goods . He frequently communicated with other Massachusetts opponents of British policy , including Samuel Adams , John Adams , Mercy Otis Warren , and others .

In May 1772 he won election to the General Court of the Province of Massachusetts Bay ( its legislative assembly ) . There he worked closely with Samuel Adams to advance colonial opposition to Parliamentary colonial policies . He was responsible for establishing Marblehead 's committee of correspondence , one of the first to be set up after that of Boston . However , an incident of mob action prompted him to resign from the committee the next year . Gerry and other prominent Marbleheaders had established a hospital for performing smallpox inoculations on Cat Island ;

because the means of transmission of the disease were not known at the time , fears amongst the local population led to protests which escalated into violence that wrecked the facilities and threatened the proprietors ' other properties .

Gerry reentered politics after the Boston Port Act closed that city 's port in 1774 , and Marblehead became a port to which relief supplies from other colonies could be delivered . As one of the town 's leading merchants and Patriots , Gerry played a major role in ensuring the storage and delivery of supplies from Marblehead to Boston , interrupting those activities only to care for his dying father . He was elected as a representative to the First Continental Congress in September 1774 , but refused , still grieving the loss of his father .

= = Congress and Revolution = =

Gerry was elected to the provincial assembly , which reconstituted itself as the Massachusetts Provincial Congress after Governor Thomas Gage dissolved the body in October 1774 . He was assigned to its committee of safety , responsible for assuring that the province 's limited supplies of weapons and gunpowder remained out of British Army hands . His actions were partly responsible for the storage of weapons and ammunition in Concord ; these stores were the target of the British raiding expedition that sparked the start of the American Revolutionary War with the Battles of Lexington and Concord in April 1775 . ( Gerry was staying at an inn at Menotomy , now Arlington , when the British marched through on the night of April 18 . ) During the Siege of Boston that followed , Gerry continued to take a leading role in supplying the nascent Continental Army , something he would continue to do as the war progressed . He leveraged business contacts in France and Spain to acquire not just munitions , but supplies of all types , and was involved in the transfer of financial subsidies from Spain to Congress . He sent ships to ports all along the American coast , and dabbled in financing privateering operations .

Unlike some merchants , there is no evidence that Gerry profiteered from this activity ( he spoke out against it , and in favor of price controls ) , although his war @-@ related merchant activities notably increased the family 's wealth . His gains were tempered to some extent by the precipitous decline in the value of paper currencies , which he held in large quantities and speculated in .

Gerry served in the Second Continental Congress from February 1776 to 1780 , when matters of the ongoing war occupied the body 's attention . He was influential in convincing a number of delegates to support passage of the United States Declaration of Independence in the debates held during the summer of 1776 ; John Adams wrote of him , " If every Man here was a Gerry , the Liberties of America would be safe against the Gates of Earth and Hell . " He was implicated as a member of the so @-@ called " Conway Cabal " , a group of Congressmen and military officers who were dissatisfied with the performance of General George Washington during the 1777 military campaign . However , Gerry took Pennsylvania leader Thomas Mifflin , one of Washington 's critics , to task early in the episode , and specifically denied knowledge of any sort of conspiracy against Washington in February 1778 .

Gerry 's political philosophy was one of limited central government , and he regularly advocated for the maintenance of civilian control of the military . He held these positions fairly consistently throughout his political career ( wavering principally on the need for stronger central government in the wake of the 1786 ? 87 Shays 's Rebellion ) and was well known for his personal integrity . In later years he was against the idea of political parties , remaining somewhat distant from the developing Federalist and Democratic @-@ Republican parties until later in his career . It was not until 1800 that he would formally associate with the Democratic @-@ Republicans in opposition to what he saw as attempts by the Federalists to centralize too much power in the national government . In 1780 he resigned from the Continental Congress over the issue , and refused offers from the state legislature to return to the Congress . He also refused appointment to the state senate , claiming he would be more effective in the state 's lower chamber , and also refused appointment as a county judge , comparing the offer by Governor John Hancock to those made by royally appointed governors to benefit their political allies . He was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1781 .

Gerry was convinced to rejoin the Confederation Congress in 1783 , when the state legislature agreed to support his call for needed reforms . He served in that body until September 1785 , during which time it met in New York City . The following year he married Ann Thompson , the daughter of a wealthy New York merchant who was twenty years his junior ; his best man was his good friend James Monroe . The couple had ten children between 1787 and 1801 , straining Ann 's health .

The war made Gerry sufficiently wealthy that when it ended he sold off his merchant interests , and began investing in land . In 1787 he purchased the Cambridge , Massachusetts estate of the last royal lieutenant governor of Massachusetts , Thomas Oliver , which had been confiscated by the state . This 100 @-@ acre ( 40 ha ) property , known as Elmwood , became the family home for the rest of Gerry 's life . He continued to own property in Marblehead , and bought a number of properties in other Massachusetts communities . He also owned shares in the Ohio Company , prompting some political opponents to characterize him as an owner of vast tracts of western lands .

= = Constitutional Convention = =

Gerry played a major role in the U.S. Constitutional Convention , held in Philadelphia during the summer of 1787 . In its deliberations he consistently advocated for a strong delineation between state and federal government powers , with state legislatures shaping the membership of federal government positions . Gerry 's opposition to popular election of representatives was rooted in part by the events of Shays 's Rebellion , a populist uprising in western Massachusetts in the year preceding the convention . Despite this position , he also sought to maintain individual liberties by providing checks on government power that might abuse or limit those freedoms . He supported the idea that the Senate composition should not be determined by population ; the view that it should instead be composed of equal numbers of members for each state prevailed in the Connecticut Compromise . The compromise was adopted on a narrow vote in which the Massachusetts delegation was divided , Gerry and Caleb Strong voting in favor . Gerry further proposed that senators of a state , rather than casting a single vote on behalf of the state , instead vote as individuals . Gerry was also vocal in opposing the Three @-@ Fifths Compromise , which counted slaves as 3 / 5 of a person for the purposes of apportionment in the House of Representatives and gave southern states a decided advantage .

= = = Advocating indirect elections = = =

Because of his fear of demagoguery and belief the people of the United States could be easily misled , Gerry also advocated indirect elections . Although he was unsuccessful in obtaining them for the lower house of Congress , Gerry did obtain such indirect elections for the U.S. Senate , whose members were to be elected by the state legislatures . Gerry also advanced numerous proposals for indirect elections of the President of the United States , most of them involving limiting the right to vote to the state governors and electors .

= = = Voting against proposed constitution = = =

Gerry was also unhappy about the lack of expression of any sort of individual liberties in the proposed constitution , and generally opposed proposals that strengthened the central government . He was one of only three delegates who voted against the proposed constitution in the convention ( the others were George Mason and Edmund Randolph ) , citing a concern about the convention 's lack of authority to enact such major changes to the nation 's system of government , and to the constitution 's lack of " federal features " .

= = = State ratification ; Bill of Rights = = =

During the ratification debates that took place in the states following the convention , Gerry

continued his opposition , publishing a widely circulated letter documenting his objections to the proposed constitution . In this document he cited the lack of a Bill of Rights as his primary objection , but also expressed qualified approval of the constitution , indicating that he would accept it with some amendment . Strong pro @-@ Constitution forces attacked him in the press , comparing him unfavorably to the Shaysites . Henry Jackson was particularly vicious : " [ Gerry has ] done more injury to this country by that infamous Letter than he will be able to make atonement in his whole life " , and Oliver Ellsworth , a convention delegate from Connecticut , charged him with deliberately courting the Shays faction . One consequence of the furor over his letter was that he was not selected as a delegate to the Massachusetts ratifying convention , although he was later invited to attend by the convention 's leadership . The convention leadership was dominated by Federalists , and Gerry was not given any formal opportunity to speak ; he left the convention after a shouting match with convention chair Francis Dana . The state ratified the constitution by a vote of 187 to 168 . The debate had the result of estranging Gerry from a number of previously friendly politicians , including chairman Dana and Rufus King .

= = United States House of Representatives = =

Anti @-@ Federalist forces nominated Gerry for governor in 1788 , but he was predictably defeated by the popular incumbent John Hancock . Following ratification , Gerry recanted his opposition to the Constitution , noting that a number of state ratifying conventions had called for amendments that he supported . He was nominated by friends ( over his own opposition to the idea ) for a seat in inaugural House of Representatives , where he then served two terms .

In June 1789 Gerry proposed that Congress consider all of the proposed constitutional amendments that various state ratifying conventions had called for ( notably those of Rhode Island and North Carolina , which had at the time still not ratified the constitution ) . In the debate that followed , he led opposition to some of the proposals , arguing that they did not go far enough in ensuring individual liberties . He successfully lobbied for inclusion of freedom of assembly in the First Amendment , and was a leading architect of the Fourth Amendment protections against search and seizure . He sought unsuccessfully to insert the word " expressly " into the Tenth Amendment , which might have more significantly limited the federal government 's power . He was successful in efforts to severely limit the federal government 's ability to control state militias . In tandem , with this protection , he had once argued against the idea of the federal government controlling a large standing army , comparing it ? most memorably and mischievously ? to a standing penis : " An excellent assurance of domestic tranquility , but a dangerous temptation to foreign adventure . "

Gerry vigorously supported Alexander Hamilton 's reports on public credit , including the assumption at full value of state debts , and supported Hamilton 's new Bank of the United States , positions consistent with earlier calls he had made for economic centralization . Although he speculated in depreciated Continental bills of credit ( the IOUs at issue ) , there is no evidence he participated in large @-@ scale speculation that attended the debate when it took place in 1790 , and he became a major investor in the new bank . He used the floor of the House to speak out against aristocratic and monarchical tendencies he saw as threats to republican ideals , and generally opposed laws and their provisions that he perceived as limiting individual and state liberties . He opposed any attempt to give officers of the executive significant powers , specifically opposing establishment of the Treasury Department because its head might gain more power than the President . He opposed measures that strengthened the Presidency ( such as the ability to fire cabinet officers ) , seeking instead to give the legislature more power over appointments .

Gerry did not stand for re @-@ election in 1792 , returning home to raise his children and care for his sickly wife . He agreed to serve as a presidential elector for John Adams in the 1796 election . During Adams ' term in office , Gerry maintained good relations with both Adams and Vice President Thomas Jefferson , hoping that the divided executive might lead to less friction . His hopes were not realized : the split between Federalists ( Adams ) and Democratic @-@ Republicans ( Jefferson ) widened .

= = XYZ Affair = =

President Adams appointed Gerry to be a member of a special diplomatic commission sent to Republican France in 1797 . Tensions had risen between the two nations after the 1796 ratification of the Jay Treaty , made between the US and Great Britain . It was seen by French leaders as signs of an Anglo @-@ American alliance , and France had consequently stepped up seizures of American ships . Adams chose Gerry , over his cabinet 's opposition ( on political grounds that Gerry was insufficiently Federalist ) , because of their long @-@ standing relationship ; Adams described Gerry as one of the " two most impartial men in America " ( Adams himself being the other ) .

Gerry joined co @-@ commissioners Charles Cotesworth Pinckney and John Marshall in France in October 1797 and met briefly with Foreign Minister Talleyrand . Some days after that meeting , the delegation was approached by three French agents ( at first identified as " X " , " Y " , and " Z " in published papers , leading the controversy to be called the " XYZ Affair " ) who demanded substantial bribes from the commissioners before negotiations could continue . The commissioners refused , and sought unsuccessfully to engage Talleyrand in formal negotiations . Believing Gerry to be the most approachable of the commissioners , Talleyrand successively froze first Pinckney and then Marshall out of the informal negotiations , and they left France in April 1798 . Gerry , who sought to leave with them , stayed behind because Talleyrand threatened war if he left . Gerry refused to make any significant negotiations afterward and left Paris in August . By then dispatches describing the commission 's reception had been published in the United States , raising calls for war . The undeclared naval Quasi @-@ War ( 1798 ? 1800 ) followed . Federalists , notably Secretary of State Timothy Pickering , accused Gerry of supporting the French and abetting the breakdown of the talks , while Adams and Republicans such as Thomas Jefferson supported him . The negative press damaged Gerry 's reputation , and he was burned in effigy by protestors in front of his home . He was only later vindicated , when his correspondence with Talleyrand was published . In response to the Federalist attacks on him , and because of his perception that the Federalist @-@ led military buildup threatened republican values , Gerry formally joined the Democratic @-@ Republican Party in early 1800 , standing for election as Governor of Massachusetts .

= = Governor of Massachusetts = =

For four years Gerry unsuccessfully sought the governorship of Massachusetts . His opponent in these races , Caleb Strong , was a popular moderate Federalist , whose party dominated the state 's politics despite a national shift toward the Republicans . In 1803 Republicans in the state were divided , and Gerry only had regional support of the party . He decided not to run in 1804 , returning to semi @-@ retirement and to deal with a personal financial crisis . His brother Samuel Russell had mismanaged his own business affairs , and Gerry had propped him up by guaranteeing a loan that was due . The matter ultimately ruined Gerry 's finances for his remaining years .

Republican James Sullivan won the governor 's seat from Strong in 1807 , but his successor was unable to hold the seat in the 1809 election , which went to Federalist Christopher Gore . Gerry stood for election again in 1810 against Gore , and won a narrow victory . Republicans cast Gore as an ostentatious British @-@ loving Tory who wanted to restore the monarchy ( his parents had remained Loyal during the Revolution ) , and Gerry as a patriotic American , while Federalists described Gerry as a " French partizan " and Gore as an honest man devoted to ridding the government of foreign influence . A temporary lessening in the threat of war with Britain aided Gerry . The two battled again in 1811 , with Gerry once again victorious in a highly acrimonious campaign .

Gerry 's first year as governor was less controversial than his second , because the Federalists controlled the state senate . He preached moderation in the political discourse , noting that it was important that the nation present a unified front in its dealings with foreign powers . In his second term , with full Republican control of the legislature , he became notably more partisan , purging much of the state government of Federalist appointees . The legislature also enacted " reforms " of the court system that resulted in an increase in the number of judicial appointments , which Gerry

filled with Republican partisans . Infighting within the party and a shortage of qualified candidates , however , played against Gerry , and the Federalists scored points by complaining vocally about the partisan nature of the reforms .

Other legislation passed during Gerry 's second year included a bill broadening the membership of Harvard 's Board of Overseers to diversify its religious membership , and another that liberalized religious taxes . The Harvard bill had significant political slant because the recent split between orthodox Congregationalists and Unitarians also divided the state to some extent along party lines , and Federalist Unitarians had recently gained control over the Harvard board .

In 1812 the state adopted new constitutionally mandated electoral district boundaries . The Republican @-@ controlled legislature had created district boundaries designed to enhance their party 's control over state and national offices , leading to some oddly shaped legislative districts . Although Gerry was unhappy about the highly partisan districting ( according to his son @-@ in @-@ law , he thought it " highly disagreeable " ) , he signed the legislation . The shape of one of the state senate districts in Essex County resembled a salamander , leading a local Federalist newspaper to print a political cartoon calling it a " Gerry @-@ mander " . Ever since , the creation of such districts has been called gerrymandering . Gerry also engaged in partisan investigations of potential libel against him by elements of the Federalist press , further damaging his popularity with moderates . The redistricting controversy , along with the libel investigation and the impending War of 1812 , contributed to Gerry 's defeat in 1812 ( once again at the hands of Caleb Strong , whom the Federalists had brought out of retirement ) . The gerrymandering of the state senate was a notable success in the 1812 election : the body was thoroughly dominated by Republicans , even though the house and the governor 's seat went to Federalists by substantial margins .

= = Vice Presidency and death = =

Gerry 's financial difficulties prompted him to ask President James Madison for a federal position after his loss in the 1812 election ( which was held early in the year ) . He was chosen by the Democratic @-@ Republican party congress to be Madison 's vice presidential running mate in the 1812 presidential election , although the nomination was first offered to John Langdon . He was viewed as a relatively safe choice who would attract Northern votes but not pose a threat to James Monroe , who was thought likely to succeed Madison . Madison easily won reelection , and Gerry took the oath of office at Elmwood in March 1813 . At that time the office of vice president was largely a sinecure ; Gerry 's duties included advancing the administration 's agenda in Congress and dispensing patronage positions in New England . Gerry 's actions in support of the War of 1812 had a partisan edge : he expressed concerns over a possible Federalist seizure of Fort Adams ( as Boston 's Fort Independence was then known ) as a prelude to Anglo @-@ Federalist cooperation , and sought the arrest of printers of Federalist newspapers .

On November 23 , 1814 , he fell seriously ill while visiting Joseph Nourse of the treasury department , and died not long after returning to his home in the Seven Buildings . He is buried in the Congressional Cemetery in Washington , D. C. , with a memorial by John Frazee . He is the only signer of the Declaration buried in the nation 's capital . The estate he left his wife and children was rich in land and poor in cash ; he had managed to repay his brother 's debts with his pay as vice president .

= = Legacy = =

Gerry is generally remembered for the use of his name in the word gerrymander , for his refusal to sign the United States Constitution , and for his role in the XYZ Affair . His path through the politics of the age has been difficult to characterize ; early biographers , including his son @-@ in @-@ law James T. Austin and Samuel Eliot Morison , struggled to explain his apparent changes in position . Biographer George Athan Billias posits that Gerry was a consistent advocate and practitioner of republicanism as it was originally envisioned , and that his role in the Constitutional Convention had a significant impact on the document it eventually produced .

Gerry had ten children , of which seven survived into adulthood : Gerry 's son , James Thompson Gerry , commanded the USS Albany ( 1846 ) , a United States Navy war sloop , which went down with all hands in 1854 .

Catharine ( 1787 ? 1850 )

Eliza ( 1791 ? 1882 )

Ann ( 1791 ? 1883 )

Elbridge , Jr . ( 1793 ? 1867 )

Thomas Russell ( 1794 ? 1848 )

Helen Maria ( 1796 ? 1864 )

James Thompson Gerry ( 1797 ? 1854 ) left West Point upon his father 's death and was Commander of the war @-@ sloop USS Albany ( 1846 ) ; the sloop disappeared with all hands 28 or 29 September 1854 near the West Indies .

Gerry 's grandson , Elbridge Gerry ( 1813 ? 1886 ) , was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Maine. and another grandson Elbridge Thomas Gerry became a distinguished lawyer and philanthropist in New York . His great @-@ grandson , Peter G. Gerry ( 1879 ? 1957 ) , was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives and a United States Senator from Rhode Island .

Gerry is depicted in John Trumbull 's Declaration of Independence . The painting was reproduced on the reverse of the two @-@ dollar bill beginning in 1976 .

The upstate New York town of Elbridge is believed to have been named in his honor , as is the western New York town of Gerry , in Chautauqua County . The town of Phillipston , Massachusetts was originally incorporated in 1786 under the name Gerry in his honor , but was changed to its present name after the town submitted a petition in 1812 , citing Democratic @-@ Republican support for the War of 1812 .

Gerry 's Landing Road in Cambridge , Massachusetts is located near the Eliot Bridge not far from Elmwood . During the 19th century , the area was known as Gerry 's Landing ( formerly known as Sir Richard 's Landing ) , and was used by a Gerry relative for a short time as a landing and storehouse . The supposed house of his birth , the Elbridge Gerry House ( it is uncertain whether he was born in the house currently standing on the site or an earlier structure ) stands in Marblehead , and that town 's Elbridge Gerry School is named in his honor .