Elbridge Gerry Papers

A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress

Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
1996
Revised 2010 March

Contact information:
http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/mss.contact

Additional search options available at:
http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms000007

LC Online Catalog record:
http://lccn.loc.gov/mm81022657

Prepared by Audrey Walker
Revised and expanded by Margaret McAleer
Collection Summary

Title: Elbridge Gerry Papers
Span Dates: 1772-1901
Bulk Dates: (bulk 1776-1814)
ID No.: MSS22657
Creator: Gerry, Elbridge, 1744-1814
Extent: 500 items ; 4 containers ; 1.4 linear feet ; 2 microfilm reels
Language: Collection material in English
Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
Summary: United States vice president, delegate to the Continental Congress, and United States representative from and governor of Massachusetts. Chiefly correspondence relating to various aspects of Gerry's public career, including his memberships in the Massachusetts General Court and Provincial Congress (where he was active on committees of correspondence, safety, and supply during the Revolution), service in the Continental Congress and the U.S. House of Representatives, governorship of Massachusetts, term as vice president of the United States, and especially his role in the 1797-1798 mission to France, known as the XYZ Affair.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

People
Adams, John, 1735-1826--Correspondence.
Adams, Samuel, 1722-1803--Correspondence.
Austin, James Trecothick, 1784-1870. James Trecothick Austin papers.
Bourne, Sylvanus, 1761-1817--Correspondence.
Dana, Francis, 1743-1811--Correspondence.
Gerry, Elbridge, 1744-1814.
Humphreys, Clement, 1777-1803--Correspondence.
King, Rufus, 1755-1827--Correspondence.
Madison, James, 1751-1836--Correspondence.
Murray, William Vans, 1760-1803--Correspondence.
Otis, Samuel Allyne, 1740-1814--Correspondence.
Pinckney, Charles Cotesworth, 1746-1825--Correspondence.
Warren, James, 1726-1808--Correspondence.
Warren, Mercy Otis, 1728-1814--Correspondence.
Wendell, John, 1731-1808--Correspondence.

Organizations
Massachusetts. General Court.
Massachusetts. Provincial Congress
United States. Continental Congress.

Subjects
XYZ Affair, 1797-1798.

Places
France--Foreign relations--United States.
Massachusetts--History--Revolution, 1775-1783.
Massachusetts--Politics and government--1775-1865.
United States--Foreign relations--France.
United States--History--Revolution, 1775-1783--Committees of correspondence.
United States--History--Revolution, 1775-1783--Committees of safety.
Administrative Information

Provenance
The papers of Elbridge Gerry, statesman, were acquired by the Library through gift and purchase from 1903 to 1996.

Processing History
The papers of Elbridge Gerry were arranged and described in 1983. Additional material received was incorporated into the collection in 1996.

Copyright Status
The status of copyright in the unpublished writings of Elbridge Gerry is governed by the Copyright Law of the United States (Title 17, U.S.C.).

Access and Restrictions
The papers of Elbridge Gerry are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Microfilm
A microfilm edition of part of these papers is available on two reels. Consult a reference librarian in the Manuscript Division concerning availability for purchase or interlibrary loan.

Preferred Citation
Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container or reel number, Elbridge Gerry Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1744, July 17</td>
<td>Born, Marblehead, Mass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1772-1773</td>
<td>Representative, Massachusetts General Court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1774-1775</td>
<td>Member, Massachusetts Provincial Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1776-1780</td>
<td>Delegate, Continental Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>1778</td>
<td>Delegate, price-fixing convention, New Haven, Conn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1783-1785</td>
<td>Delegate, Continental Congress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1785-1786  Member, Massachusetts House of Representatives
1786     Married Ann Thompson
1787     Delegate, Constitutional Convention, Philadelphia, Pa.
1789-1793 Member, United States House of Representatives
1797-1798 Member, XYZ mission to France
1810-1812 Governor of Massachusetts
1813-1814 Vice president of the United States
1814, Nov. 23 Died, Washington, D.C.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of Elbridge Gerry (1744-1814) span the years 1772-1901 with the bulk of the documents concentrated between the years 1776 and 1814. The collection consists mainly of correspondence, but includes a few miscellaneous items, most of which relate to his mission to France in 1797-1798. Approximately two-thirds of the documents are photostatic and typewritten reproductions of original material held by others. Most of these are from the Gerry Estates Collection in New York, New York, comprising original and transcribed documents owned by members of the Gerry family. Some of the photostatic copies are faded and difficult to read.

The collection is illustrative of all phases of Gerry's public career, touching on his membership in the Massachusetts General Court and the Provincial Congress where he was active with the committees of correspondence and safety and chairman of the Committee of Supply, his service in the Continental Congress and in the United States House of Representatives, his governorship of Massachusetts, and his tenure as vice president. However, the largest segment of the correspondence centers around Gerry's mission to France. The collection contains correspondence and memoranda relating to these negotiations, two letterbooks which were apparently used interchangeably, two issues of Le Publiciste, 6-7 May 1798, and the safe conduct pass issued to Gerry, 17 July 1798. Later correspondence and papers also relate to Gerry's activities during the mission.

Reproductions for the period 1817-1836 are typewritten copies of originals in the Gerry Estates Collection transcribed for the biography of Gerry written by his son-in-law, James Trecotthick Austin.

A calendar prepared in 1960 listing Gerry's correspondence in his papers and in those of some of his contemporaries is available in the Manuscript Division. Additional Gerry papers are located in the New York Public Library, Massachusetts Historical Society, and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. A microfilm edition of the Elbridge Gerry Papers at the Massachusetts Historical Society is available for use in the Manuscript Division's reading room. Official correspondence relating to the XYZ mission to France can be found in the archives of the United States and France. The Manuscript Division has in its collection of French reproductions photocopies of the originals held by the Ministère des Affaires Etrangères.


Documents added to the collection in 1996 consist largely of letters, including copies and drafts, written by Gerry between 1774 and 1814. They cover a wide variety of subjects including partisan politics, patronage appointments, commercial treaties, the War of 1812, and family matters. There are several communications from Gerry while governor to the Massachusetts legislature. The Addition also includes letters to Gerry from Francis Dana, James Lovell, James Sullivan,
and James Warren as well as committee reports from the Continental Congress in 1779 and the Massachusetts General Court in 1780.

**Organization of the Papers**

The collection is arranged in four series:

- Correspondence, 1774-1814
- Miscellany, 1798-1901
- Reproductions, 1772-1836
- 1996 Addition, 1774-1814
## Description of Series

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Container</th>
<th>Series</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BOX 1, REEL 1</td>
<td><strong>Correspondence, 1774-1814</strong></td>
<td>Letters received and copies of letters sent. Arranged chronologically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 1, REEL 1</td>
<td><strong>Miscellany, 1798-1901</strong></td>
<td>Accounts, biographical data, correspondence, memoranda, and newspaper clippings. Arranged by type of material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 2-3, REEL 1-2</td>
<td><strong>Reproductions, 1772-1836</strong></td>
<td>Photostatic and typewritten copies of documents owned by others. Includes correspondence, certificates, committee reports, and notes. Arranged by location of originals and chronologically therein.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOX 4, Not filmed</td>
<td><strong>1996 Addition, 1774-1814</strong></td>
<td>Correspondence and related documents, some with typed transcripts. Arranged chronologically.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Container List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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| BOX 1 REEL 1 | **Correspondence, 1774-1814**  
Letters received and copies of letters sent.  
Arranged chronologically. |
| BOX 1 REEL 1 | 1774-1814  
(4 folders)  
Letterbook, 24 Sept. 1797-20 Nov. 1800  
Letters to John Adams, 8 July 1799, and William Short, 27 July 1801 |
| BOX 1 REEL 1 | **Miscellany, 1798-1901**  
Accounts, biographical data, correspondence, memoranda, and newspaper clippings.  
Arranged by type of material. |
| BOX 1 REEL 1 | Account of stores purchased at Gerry's request for the *Sophia* (Brig), 1799  
Biographical data, undated  
Correspondence regarding information in the Gerry Papers relating to a library for Congress, 1901  
*Le Publiciste*, 6-7 May 1798  
Safe conduct pass issued to Gerry, 17 July 1798  
United States propositions relating to a commercial treaty with France, undated |
| BOX 2-3 REEL 1-2 | **Reproductions, 1772-1836**  
Photostatic and typewritten copies of documents owned by others. Includes correspondence, certificates, committee reports, and notes.  
Arranged by location of originals and chronologically therein. |
| BOX 2 REEL 1 | Gerry Estates Collection, New York, N.Y.  
1772-96  
(12 folders) |
| BOX 3 REEL 1-2 | 1797-1836  
(7 folders) |
| BOX 3 REEL 1-2 | Fragments, undated |
| BOX 3 REEL 1-2 | Photocopies from various sources, 1776-1813 |
Reproductions, 1772-1836

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