

Elbridge Gerry Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2019

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

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm81022657>

Additional search options available at: <https://hdl.loc.gov/loc.mss/eadmss.ms000007>

Prepared by Manuscript Division Staff

Finding aid encoded by Library of Congress Manuscript Division, 2000
Revised 2019 November

Collection Summary

Title: Elbridge Gerry Papers

Span Dates: 1772-1901

Bulk Dates: 1776-1814

ID No.: MSS22657

Creator: Gerry, Elbridge, 1744-1814

Extent: 500 items

Extent: 4 containers

Extent: 1.4 linear feet

Extent: 2 microfilm reels

Language: Collection material in English

Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/mm81022657>

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 LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

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 family.

Gerry, Ann Thompson, 1763-1849--Correspondence.

Gerry, Elbridge, 1744-1814.

Hamilton, Alexander, 1757-1804.

Humphreys, Clement, Jr., 1777-1803--Correspondence.

King, Rufus, 1755-1827--Correspondence.

Lovell, James, 1737-1814--Correspondence.

Madison, James, 1751-1836--Correspondence.

Murray, William Vans, 1760-1803--Correspondence.

Otis, Samuel Allyne, 1740-1814--Correspondence.

Pinckney, Charles Cotesworth, 1746-1825--Correspondence.

Sullivan, James, 1744-1808--Correspondence.

Talleyrand-Périgord, Charles Maurice de, prince de Bénévent, 1754-1838--Correspondence.

Warren, James, 1726-1808--Correspondence.

Warren, Mercy Otis, 1728-1814--Correspondence.

Wendell, John, 1731-1808--Correspondence.

Organizations

Bank of the United States (1791-1811)

Massachusetts. General Court.

Massachusetts. Provincial Congress

United States. Congress. House.

United States. Continental Congress.

Subjects

Banks and banking--United States.
XYZ Affair, 1797-1798.

Places

France--Foreign relations--United States.
Massachusetts--History--Revolution, 1775-1783.
Massachusetts--Politics and government--1775-1865.
United States--Commercial policy.
United States--Commercial treaties.
United States--Foreign relations--France.
United States--History--Revolution, 1775-1783 .
United States--History--Revolution, 1775-1783--Committees of correspondence.
United States--History--Revolution, 1775-1783--Committees of safety.
United States--History--Revolution, 1775-1783--Equipment and supplies.
United States--History--War of 1812
United States--Politics and government--1789-1815.

Occupations

Delegates, U.S. Continental Congress--Massachusetts.
Governors--Massachusetts.
Representatives, U.S. Congress--Massachusetts.
Vice-Presidents--United States.

Administrative Information

The papers of Elbridge Gerry, statesman, were acquired by the Library through gift and purchase from 1903 to 1997.

Processing History

The papers of Elbridge Gerry were arranged and described in 1983 by Audrey Walker. Additional material received was incorporated into the collection in 1996 by Margaret McAleer. Material received in 1997 was processed as an addition in 2019 by Laney Stevenson.

Additional Description

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.

Other Repositories

Additional papers of Elbridge Gerry are located in the New York Public Library, Massachusetts Historical Society, and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Related Material

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.

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

Date	Event
1744, July 17	Born, Marblehead, Mass.
1758-1762	Attended Harvard College, Cambridge, Mass.
1772-1773	Representative, Massachusetts General Court
1774-1775	Member, Massachusetts Provincial Congress
1776-1780	Delegate, Continental Congress
1778	Delegate, price-fixing convention, New Haven, Conn.
1783-1785	Delegate, Continental Congress
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*, May 6-7, 1798, and the safe conduct pass issued to Gerry, July 17, 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 Trecothick Austin.

Correspondents in the Gerry Papers include John Adams, Samuel Adams, Sylvanus Bourne, Francis Dana, Clement Humphreys, Rufus King, James Madison, William Vans Murray, Samuel Allyne Otis, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, James Warren, Mercy Otis Warren, and John Wendell.

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 1996 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. The 2019 Addition is a letter, with transcript, dated February 4, 1791 from Gerry to his wife, Ann, discussing family matters and referencing the debate on the national bank proposed by Alexander Hamilton.

Organization of the Papers

The collection is arranged in four series:

- [Correspondence, 1774-1814](#)
- [Miscellany, 1798-1901](#)
- [Reproductions, 1772-1836](#)
- [Additions, 1774-1814](#)

Description of Series

Container	Series
BOX 1 REEL 1	<u>Correspondence, 1774-1814</u> Letters received and copies of letters sent. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 1 REEL 1	<u>Miscellany, 1798-1901</u> Accounts, biographical data, correspondence, memoranda, and newspaper clippings. Arranged by type of material.
BOX 2-3 REEL 1-2	<u>Reproductions, 1772-1836</u> 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 4 Not filmed	<u>Additions, 1774-1814</u> Correspondence and related documents, some with typed transcripts. Arranged chronologically.

Container List

Container	Contents
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 <i>Sophia</i> (Brig), 1799 Biographical data, undated Correspondence regarding information in the Gerry Papers relating to a library for Congress, 1901 <i>Le Publiciste</i> , 6-7 May 1798 Remarks by Gerry on John Marshall's letter of 12 Nov. 1798 and on Timothy Pickering's letter of 10 Dec. 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. 1772-1796 (12 folders)
BOX 3 REEL 1-2	1797-1836 (7 folders) Fragments, undated Photocopies from various sources, 1776-1813 Letterbook, 1797-1801
BOX 4 Not filmed	Additions, 1774-1814 Correspondence and related documents, some with typed transcripts. Arranged chronologically.
BOX 4	1996 Addition
BOX 4	Correspondence and related documents, 1774-1814 (4 folders)

Additions, 1774-1814

Container **Contents**

BOX 4 2019 Addition
BOX 4 Correspondence with typed transcript, 1791