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FOURTH OF JULY REFLECTIONS 2005[©]

Robert W. Smiley, Jr., Chairman

It is time once again to commemorate the continuing significance of the Fourth of July. This year we highlight the lives of four more towering patriots, all signers of the Declaration of Independence, and all from what became the State of Massachusetts: Samuel Adams, John Adams, Elbridge Gerry, and Robert Treat Paine. They, along with the other 52 signers, put their country ahead of their own interests and fortunes, and often their own personal safety.

It can be an overwhelming experience to contemplate the conviction and principles, the fervor and devotion, and the great personal sacrifices made by those men and their families who were pivotal to the founding of our great Country. We hope our sending you these brief biographies to reflect upon will increase your appreciation for the freedom they bequeathed to us, and that as you enjoy the Independence Day holiday once again, you will thank them for helping bring us the blessings of liberty which we continue to enjoy today.

We look forward to continuing to send additional Fourth of July Reflections in the years to come. We had so many requests for our earlier Fourth of July Reflections that we put them on our website. Please enjoy them as well. <http://www.benefitcapital.com/4threflect.html>

Samuel Adams

Born: September 27, 1722 – Quincy, Massachusetts

Died: October 2, 1803, Boston

Of all the signatories of the Declaration of Independence, only one became known as “The Father of The American Revolution.” That one singular honor belongs to Samuel Adams, born on September 27, 1722, in Quincy, Massachusetts, a town near Boston. The essence of his loyalty and patriotism can easily be discerned from just two of his myriad quotable writings and statements: “If ye love wealth better than liberty, the tranquility of servitude better than the animating contest of freedom, go home from us in peace. We ask not your counsels or your arms. Crouch down and lick the hand that feeds you. May your chains set lightly upon you, and may posterity forget that you were our countrymen...” and, “Among the natural rights of the colonists are these: first, a right to life; secondly, to liberty; thirdly to property; together with the right to support and defend them in the best manner they can.” Indeed, he has gone down in history as being the first American statesman to conclude that independence was the only remedy for the troubles of the colonies.

A distinguished student at Harvard College, Adams earned a master’s degree prior to undertaking the study of law. Prophetically, the subject of his thesis was “Whether it be lawful to resist the supreme magistrate if the commonwealth cannot otherwise be preserved.” He first partnered in a brewery business with his father, and subsequently inherited it. But young Adams’ talents suited him neither to the brewery business nor to being any sort of merchant, and he lost the capital bestowed upon him by his father.

It was his penchant for politics that clouded Adams’ business judgment, and soon he was an active and popular leader in opposing the arbitrary conduct of the British government (having gained considerable experience with the subject of taxation as the tax collector for Boston). It was Adams who, in 1764, drew up the instructions for the Massachusetts Committee, appointed by the people of Boston to represent their wishes and guide representatives to the general court in opposing the right of taxation by the British parliament. This constituted the first public protest in America against the right of Parliament to tax the colonies.

Adams’ deeply felt and manifest interest in the rights of the colonies made him a leader in the Patriotic Party’s popular assemblies and bold in denouncing the unjust acts of the British ministry. In 1765, at the age of 44, he was elected as Boston’s representative to the general court of Massachusetts. He became clerk to the court, was appointed to almost every committee, assisted in drawing nearly every report, and exercised a large share of influence in almost every meeting. He went on to have the honor of suggesting the first congress at New York, which prepared the way for the Continental Congress ten years later, and at length, for the union and confederacy of the colonies. He was a leading advocate of republicanism and a good friend of Thomas Paine. Adams was a major influence in preventing further hostilities after the Boston Massacre in 1770, the first instance of bloodshed between the British and the Americans. Following his selection in 1774 as a member of the provincial council during the crisis in Boston, Adams was next appointed as a representative to the Continental Congress, gaining renown for his fine elocution, keen writing skills, and passionate advocacy for independence from Britain. As a member of the first Continental Congress, he was among the staunchest advocates for the declaration of American independence. Throughout the dark days of the revolutionary war, he stood

out as an inspiration to his fellow Americans, raising their despairing spirits and managing conflicts among disagreeing factions. Adams worked tirelessly, and no man was more conscientious in his opposition to British tyranny.

Adams remained a man of modest means, turning aside many offers of fortune and power, and remained an example of moral courage. He doggedly pursued his vision from 1768 until our new country came into being. After retiring from Congress in 1781, he went on to serve in the Massachusetts State Senate, presiding for several years. In 1789, he was elected lieutenant governor, remaining as such until John Hancock's death in 1794, when he became Governor. Following several reelections, he retired from public life in 1797. Samuel Adams died October 2, 1803, at the age of 81.

John Adams

Born: October 30, 1735 – Quincy, Massachusetts

Died: July 4, 1826

A descendant of the Puritans, John Adams was born in Quincy, Massachusetts, on October 30, 1735. Having studied and trained to be a lawyer, he graduated from Harvard College in 1755 and was admitted to the bar of Suffolk in 1758. His strong bent for politics evidenced itself immediately, and he was a very early proponent of eventual independence for the colonies.

In 1765 he published his *Essay on the Canon and Feudal Law*, showing that in leaving their native land, our New England ancestors were driven principally by their desire to deliver themselves from the monarchical powers and political systems of their homelands. The document called on people not only to defend, but also to study and understand their rights and privileges; and urged them to spread the knowledge. He joined the Sons of Liberty and, also in 1765, opposed the Stamp Act.

With both his professional and personal reputations growing, in 1773 and 1774 Adams was chosen to be a counselor by the members of the general court, but was rejected initially by Governor Hutchinson, and later by Governor Gage. After serving in the Massachusetts House of Representatives, Adams was appointed to the Continental Congress in 1774. Governor Gage's efforts to interfere with Adams' appointment turned out to be England's last actual attempt to exercise political power in or over Massachusetts. Adams was placed on the first and most important committees and continued to lead the movement for independence. Along with Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and two others, he was chosen to draft a manifesto declaring independence. Thomas Jefferson authored the Declaration of Independence, but Adams was its greatest supporter on the floor of Congress. To quote Jefferson, "John Adams was our Colossus on the floor."

During the remainder of 1776, and all of 1777, Adams was deeply engaged in the affairs of Congress. He served as a member of 90 different committees and was the chairman of 25. In December 1777, he was appointed commissioner to France, but he returned to America in the summer of 1779, having found little business of public relevance left for him to do.

John Adams' lifetime of accomplishments and his contributions to the beginnings of the new Nation are too numerous to cover here. Just a few examples of note: He suggested and advocated the choice of General George Washington for appointment as Chief of the American armies by the Continental Congress. In 1785 he was America's

first ambassador to England. He was elected Vice President when George Washington became our first President. Adams could not have foreseen the changes in the importance of the Vice Presidency that would come about in the 20th Century. He found it a profoundly frustrating experience and once wrote to his wife Abigail: “My country has in its wisdom contrived for me the most insignificant office that ever the invention of man contrived or his imagination conceived.”

After serving as such for eight years, Adams became President, but after one term he was defeated by Jefferson. Though closely allied in the earlier struggle for independence, Adams and Jefferson parted bitterly during their presidential years. Adams put in with the Federalists, promoting a strong central government, while Jefferson led the Democratic-Republicans, who were in favor of a more limited central government. As the end of their lives neared, these two patriots did reconcile, and strangely, both died on July 4, 1826, the national holiday resulting from the achievement of the Declaration having been first signed, as opposed to July 2, the date the Resolution for Independence had passed, which Adams had always felt was the more important date. John Adams died at the age of 90.

Elbridge Gerry

Born: July 17, 1744 – Marblehead, Massachusetts

Died: November 23, 1814

Born on July 17, 1744, in Marblehead, Massachusetts, Elbridge Gerry was the son of an immigrant who, in 1730, came to America and in short order became a successful merchant. His father stayed in Marblehead until his death in 1774, having earned great respect and esteem as a man of discretion and good judgment, traits which became manifest in his son at an early age. Elbridge became a student at Harvard College at the young age of 14, graduating in 1762. Although keenly drawn to the idea of becoming a physician, shortly after leaving college he too became a merchant, and after a few years had amassed sizeable wealth.

Gerry’s 42-year career of nearly constant public service began in 1772, when his reputation amongst the people in Marblehead led to his being sent to the general court of Massachusetts as their representative. His reelection speaks for his performance. It was during this second term that Samuel Adams championed the efforts for what led to the formation of “committees of correspondence” throughout the province, allowing for the uninhibited sharing of intelligence. The House of Representatives appointed Elbridge to one of these committees, and as one of its youngest members, he played an active and prominent part in spreading the infectious spirit of patriotism that was growing throughout the country, and in all of the subsequent efforts to drive the royal government from Massachusetts. A brief but voluntary hiatus from Gerry’s political activities resulted from his outrage at the Boston Tea Party, an act that he saw as a “savage mobility” of his fellow colonists.

Convinced by Adams, and with a vengeance, he once again fully supported the movement for independence. As a member of the Provincial Congress’ Committee of Safety, he helped direct armed resistance against the British, and much of his personal fortune was spent in acquiring ammunition, food, clothing and troops for America’s army, since an all-out war for independence was fast approaching. In the evening of April 18, 1775, the British army marched on Lexington and Concord. Gerry, a member

of the Provincial Committee of Congress, along with the other members, watched them march by their dwelling house. Only when a detachment turned toward this house did they escape—half dressed—to a cornfield, where they waited for more than an hour, until the soldiers had searched every apartment of the house “for the members of the rebel congress” and had gone. This was a time when the British were attempting to take influential members of Congress hostage, or ship them to England to be tried for treason, in order to discourage their associates and friends.

Gerry was elected as the Massachusetts delegate to the Continental Congress, and was seated on February 9, 1776. Gerry did cast his vote for independence but was not in Congress on August 2, the formal day of the signing, and did not sign until November 19, 1776. He continued to serve in the Congress until September 1785. Then, in 1787, he was called out of his retirement to serve on the Constitutional Convention. He had voiced objections to elements of the Constitution, and was censured for that opposition, yet once the Constitution was adopted, he was chosen by his district to represent them in the new Congress where he served enthusiastically for four years.

Upon his return from a diplomatic mission to France in October 1798, the Republican Party in Massachusetts successfully solicited Gerry to run as their candidate for governor. This effort met with failure, but in 1805, their wishes were met and Gerry was elected. He retired the following year, but in 1810, he was again elected as the governor of the province of Massachusetts. It was during this two-year term that the Republican-dominated legislature had redrawn district lines to favor representation of the Republicans over the Federalists, a project in which Gerry played no part and which he privately opposed, but for which the Federalists still blamed him. A Federalist newspaper published a political cartoon depicting the oddly shaped district covering Essex County as resembling a salamander. The cartoonist dubbed his creation a “Gerry-mander.” Ironically the term gerrymandering has been used ever since, in any context where political units are formed in unnatural or unfair ways and manifest favoritism.

In 1812, Elbridge Gerry was nominated for the office of Vice President. He won the election and his inauguration took place on March 4, 1813. However, he died suddenly at the age of 70 while in his carriage on his way to the Capitol as President of the Senate on November 23, 1814. He was survived by his wife Ann and their three sons and four daughters.

Robert Treat Paine

Born: March 11, 1731 – Boston, Massachusetts

Died: May 11, 1814

Robert Treat Paine, a native of Boston, was born in 1731. His documented genealogy goes back to his maternal great-grandfather, a signer of the Mayflower Compact, an acting president of Harvard, and a colonial governor from Connecticut. Thomas, his father, was pastor of a church in Weymouth, in the vicinity of Boston, but was forced to resign due to failing health and engaged in mercantile pursuits after moving to Boston proper. As a youngster, Paine studied for seven years at the Latin School, where his upbringing, intelligence, and consequent popularity served him well. He went on to study theology and law at Harvard College. Before his graduation in 1749, his father’s business failed, and on leaving the university he briefly taught public school in a country village.

After one term he gave up teaching, and given his solid Christian work ethic, involved himself in various endeavors—salesman, merchant, and whaler. In 1755, he was chaplain of the troops in the northern frontier, after which he preached in civilian pulpits in and around Boston. He returned to teaching in order to support himself while completing his studies in law, and was admitted to the bar in 1757, at 26 years of age.

For a time he practiced law in Boston, before moving to Taunton, Massachusetts, where he forged the reputation as a formidable barrister with his furious opposition to the imposition of the Stamp Act in 1768. With the dissolution of the general court by Sir Francis Bernard, then the governor of Massachusetts, the leading men of Boston called a convention to which Paine was the delegate from Taunton. This convention lasted several days, despite Governor Bernard's efforts to prevent its taking place. Numerous heart-felt resolutions were adopted, all being structured to focus the colonists' attention on their rights and to make manifest to the ministry of England their resolve to act independently of the governor if those rights were violated.

On March 15, 1770, Robert Treat Paine married Sally Cobb, daughter of a local tavern keeper and sister of General David Cobb of the Revolution. Late that year he was thrown into greater public focus by his stellar involvement in the litigation surrounding the Boston Massacre. Here he acted for the prosecution, representing Britain, opposing defense counsel John Adams. However, he acted with honor and resolve, fervently supporting the just rights of both sides.

Paine was elected to Taunton's general assembly and to the first Continental Congress in 1774. The purpose of this Congress was to address the people of America, while petitioning the King with their grievances and asserting their rights, and recommending the suspension of colonial importation from Britain. They asked for peace, liberty, and safety, while hoping for the restitution of close ties and harmony between the two countries. In a revealing statement to friends, Paine said that he dreaded "the mad rage of unrestrained liberty fully as much as the arbitrary imposition of uncontrolled power."

Paine remained an elected congressional delegate from Massachusetts for several years. At the Second Congress he received the nickname of "The Objection Maker," by opposing nearly every issue on the floor. Having never lost all hope of reconciliation with Britain, he was seen as a rather moderate Patriot, having signed the "Olive Branch Petition." However, at the Congress of 1776, from which the Declaration of Independence was published to the world, Robert Treat Paine was resolute in his support, giving his vote and affixing his name. During the intervals between congressional sessions, Paine filled several important offices in his home state of Massachusetts. In 1780, he was called upon to take part in the deliberations of the convention aimed at drafting a constitution for the Commonwealth. Later, as attorney general and then Supreme Court justice, he was considered severe, but always honorable and strictly impartial. He fathered eight children during his marriage, was a founder and active member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and received the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws from Harvard University. He died on May 11, 1814, at 84 years of age.