

CANAWLERS AT REST

DR. ELBRIDGE GERRY WHEELOCK

b. November 25, 1814
d. August 5, 1892

By Carolyn I. Schmidt

Elbridge Gerry Wheelock comes from notable American ancestry. About the time of the rebellion of the Duke of Monmouth and during Cromwell's wars in England, three brothers, who had large estates, arrived in Massachusetts. One of these brothers was Thomas Phineas Wheelock, Elbridge's grandfather, a first cousin of Eleazer Wheelock, who was the first president of Dartmouth College. Thomas' wife, Prudence Dodge, was the first cousin of Daniel Webster's mother.

Phineas Wheelock (2-21-1781,8-1-1848), Elbridge's father, was born in Winchester, New Hampshire and was a silversmith in Boston. There he married Margaret Hennessy and had three children:

John Wheelock
Margaret Wheelock
William Wheelock

After Margaret's death Phineas married Elizabeth Anna Hennessy (? , 10-?-1823) and had five more children:

Louisa Wheelock (4-?-1811, 5-4-1849)
m. John Murphy
Catherine Wheelock (?-?-1818, 1850-55 Hunteertown)
m. Amos P. DeLong (?-?-1819, ?)
Elbridge Gerry Wheelock (11-25-1814, 8-5-1892)
(7-26-1840) m. Esther Hatch (7-27-1823, 1-12-1850)
(5-23-1850) m. Hannah Moody (abt 1830, 2-5-1909)
Sarah Wheelock
m ? Bacon
Elizabeth Wheelock (? , at age 5)

Elizabeth Anna Hennessy Wheelock, Elbridge's mother, was born in Boston. Her father was from Londonderry, Ireland and her mother was of Puritan extraction. The family moved to Plattsburg, New York where

she died at age 38. Phineas died twenty-five years later in Hunteertown, Allen County, Indiana.

Elbridge Gerry Wheelock, our subject, was born in Burlington, Vermont on November 25, 1814 to Phineas Wheelock (2-21-1781, 8-1-1848) and Elizabeth Anna (Hennessy) Wheelock (?-?-1785, 10-?-1823). His father had returned from Boston to Burlington due to financial reverses.

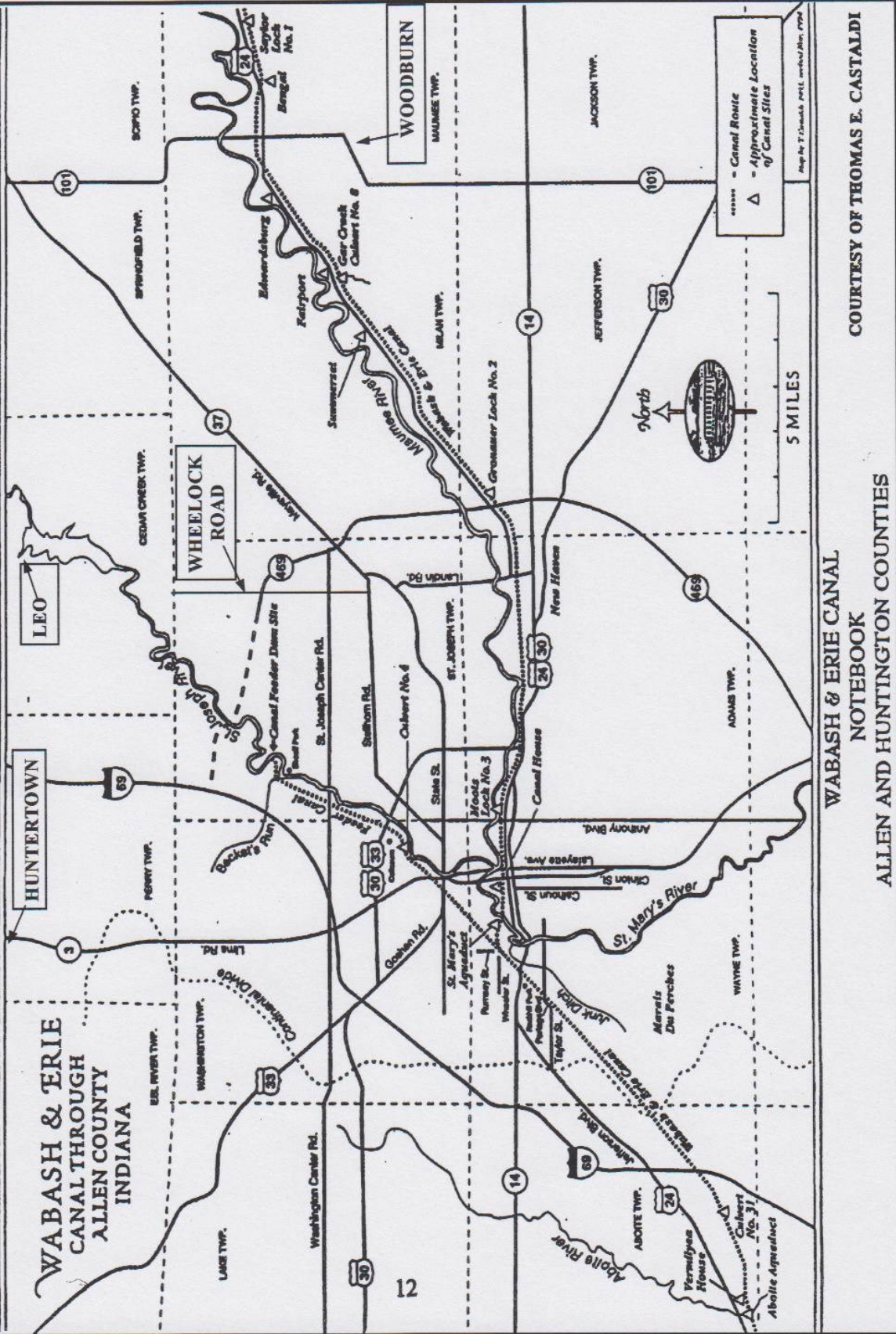
On November 23, 1814, two days before Elbridge Gerry Wheelock's birth, Elbridge Gerry, the 5th Vice President of the United States had died. Elbridge Gerry had been a delegate to the Continental Congress, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, a delegate to the U.S. Constitutional Convention, and was in the first class of Representatives in the House representing Massachusetts from 1789-1793. He was elected Governor of Massachusetts in 1810 and 1811. He was Vice President of the United States during James Madison's second term. In 1812 he gave birth to the idea of "gerrymandering" election districts. He died in office of heart failure. He was so loved by the people that many boys were named after him at the time — example Elbridge Gerry Vinton proprietor of the Vinton House, a Whitewater Canal and National Road Inn in Cambridge City, Indiana.

Elbridge attended Plattsburgh Academy in New York with Alfred Peck Edgerton (see *The Hoosier Packet* January 2011) and Joseph Ketchum Edgerton. After graduation Elbridge moved to Cleveland, Ohio to teach school and became the principal of the public schools. While holding this position for over three years he studied medicine in his leisure hours. He attended lectures in the old Western Reserve Medical College but didn't graduate since there was such a high demand for doctors in the new settlements at the time.

From 1837-43 the Wabash & Erie Canal was being built to the east from Fort Wayne and across the Indiana/Ohio state line. Elbridge was appointed surgeon of the division extending from Fort Wayne to Defiance, Ohio. His obituary says, "The labor connected with this position was burdensome and not very remunerative." While practicing for the canal workers he settled at Woodburn in Maumee Township, Allen County.

After the canal was finished Elbridge moved to a colony, which had been established by William Hunter in 1837 in Allen County, Indiana. Hunter platted the town of Hunteertown. Elbridge was its first physician. He purchased a 300 acre farm there and cultivated it as well as practicing medicine. His obituary says, "The country was very thinly settled, and the roads were mostly bridle paths, so that horseback was about the only means of locomotion. His practice extended to Kendallville, Au-

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burn and all points twenty miles north of Hometown, so that often it took him three days to make his calls and return home. He has often said that those were the happiest days of his life, for off in the forest with no companion but his horse, he could study nature in her true simplicity and enjoy a freedom which does not now exist."

On July 25, 1840 Elbridge married Esther Hatch (7-27-1823, 1-12-1850) at Hometown. They had five children two of which died in 1848:

- Ellen Elizabeth Wheelock (4-7-1842, 2-25-1848)
- Elbridge "Gerry" Wheelock (1843, 1883)
- Gertrude Wheelock (10-21-1845, 12-25-1848)
- Thomas Hatch Wheelock (1-23-1847, 10-12-1849)
- Ellen Gertrude Wheelock (12-14-1848, 9-5-1849)

In 1849 Elbridge bought a 160 acre farm near Hometown. Then Wheelock Road, which intersects St. Joe Road, was named for him that year. What should have been a happier year was not, for two more of his children died. Only his son "Gerry" survived. Then in January 1850 his wife Esther passed away and was buried in old Hometown Cemetery.

Although there is no record of why these children and their mother died, some of them may have died from cholera, a bacterial disease usually spread through contaminated water. It caused severe diarrhea and dehydration and could be fatal in a matter of hours especially to those already in a weakened condition. An exceptionally bad outbreak occurred in 1849 and returned in 1852 and 1854 eventually claiming 600 lives. Fort Wayne and Allen County knew it was coming and on April 12, 1849 the city council met to set up a plan to prevent its spread. They moved canal boat captain Asa Fairfield's log house that he had used as a soap and candle factory to the county farm establishing a hospital and readying it for patients. A representative was appointed in each ward "to examine the streets, alleys, stables, pig sties, cellars, standing pools of water, slaughter houses and other places" in an attempt to remove any filth. Every house received a handbill instructing them to use lime and other disinfectants that they provided. They held a day of fasting and prayer. But their attempts were futile. The first case was that of a canal laborer.

The schoolhouse of St. Augustine's Catholic Church was set up as another hospital and the Sisters of Charity acted as nurses. In Fort Wayne persons living on East Washington, East Jefferson and East Wayne streets were especially afflicted. It got so bad that the city council appointed a committee to find "Three strong, stout-hearted, able-bodied men to attend to the sick and suffering."

Charles Beecher in a letter to Milton Badger on October 31, 1849 writes: "And yet it [cholera] came as if nothing had happened. Citizens talked of cutting the canal, or drawing off the boats. But the cholera did not come by water, it fell like a bomb shell upon the S. E. part of town [Ft. Wayne], and scattered death...itself quite capriciously into other parts of town & then disappeared. Sixty or Seventy deaths were attributed to this Scourge [in 1849]. The principle scope of its operation was among the Germans."

On May 23, 1850 Elbridge married Hannah Moody (abt 1830, 2-5-1909) in DeKalb County, Indiana. They were the parents of three children:

- Thomas Phineas Wheelock (3-2-1851, 9-3-1858)
- John Davis Wheelock (1853, 12-11-1921)
- Elisha Kent Kane Wheelock (6-9-1857, 12-28-1928)

In 1854 George Murphy entered Elbridge's office in Hometown and began studying medicine. At the same time he studied at the high school and graduated from the commercial college in Ft. Wayne, Indiana. Later on he became the leading physician at Leo.

In 1858 Elbridge lost another child. His son Thomas died.

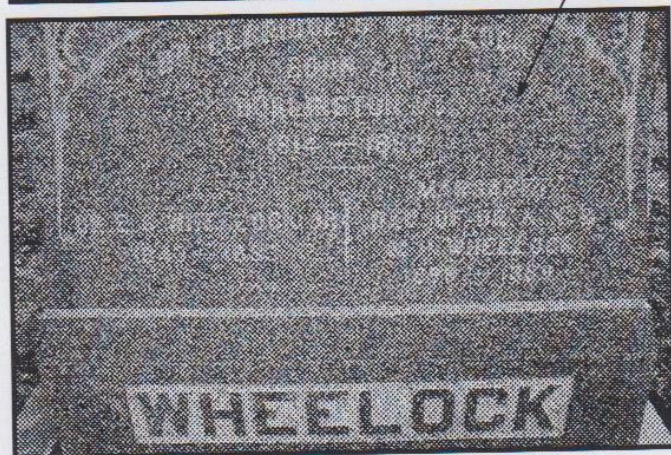
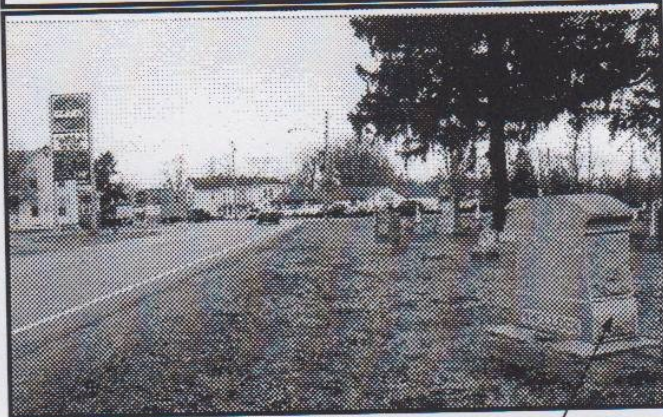
The 1860 United States Federal Census showed Elbridge, a physician, and his wife Hannah living with Elbridge G. [Gerry] Wheelock age 16, a laborer, John D. Wheelock age 7, Kent Kane Wheelock age 3, and Mary Delong [probably his niece]. He had real estate valued at \$3,600 and a personal estate of \$400. They were living in Perry Township, Allen County, Indiana.

The 1870 Census showed Elbridge, a doctor, living with Hannah, his wife, and John Wheelock age 16 at school and Case [Kane] Wheelock age 13. He had real estate valued at \$10,000 and a personal estate of \$2,000. They were living in Cedar Creek Township, Allen County, Indiana.

The 1880 Census showed Elbridge, a physician, and Hannah, keeping house, living with John D. Wheelock age 27, druggist, and Englebert Muller, age 24. They were living in Cedar Creek Township, Allen County, Indiana.

Dr. Elbridge Gerry Wheelock died at age 77 in his son's, Dr. K. Kent, home at 141 Maumee Avenue on Friday August 5, 1892 at 4:30 p.m. He had been very ill with diabetes mellitus. On Sunday August 7 his body was taken to Leo, Indiana where funeral services were held at 3 p.m. and he was interred in Cedar Creek Township Cemetery at Leo in Range XIII E, Township 32N. He shares a stone with his son and granddaughter.

Three of Elbridge's sons survived to live useful



Dr. Elbridge G. Wheelock Born At Burlington, VT 1814-1892
 Dr. E. G. Wheelock Jr. 1843-1883
 Margaret Dau. Of Dr. K.N. & M. H Wheelock 1888-1889 BS

lives:

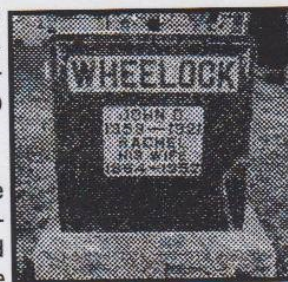
Elbridge "Gerry" Wheelock Jr. attended Perry Centre Seminary, founded in 1856 by Nathaniel Fitch, Jacob Kell and George B. Bloyd and studied medicine at the University of Michigan. He graduated from Cleveland's Western Reserve Medical College in 1873-74. He practiced at Huntertown until April 1877 and then took over Elbridge's practice in Leo. He practiced only for a brief period in Fort Wayne before returning to Leo, where he later died. He was "a man of brilliant talent and unusual culture....as an extemporaneous orator on any subject called for, he was a peer in the county, and his retentive memory was stored with the classics of literature." He married Ada Moore on April 12, 1866. They had four children.

Elisha Kent Kane Wheelock worked in the dental office of Loag & Brown in Fort Wayne for two years at ages 14-15. In 1874 he entered and completed the preparatory course at the University of Michigan and entered the medical department where he studied two years. He matriculated to Bellevue Hospital Medical Col-

lege of New York in 1879 and was graduated in 1880. That spring he began practicing at Huntertown but moved to Fort Wayne in November and had a very successful practice. In 1881 he married Matilda Henderson and had three children. In 1882 he was elected Allen County Coroner. He was a student and assistant surgeon in the New York Eye and Ear Infirmary in 1883-84. Their daughter Margaret was born in 1888 and died in 1889. In 1898 he was one of twenty councilmen serving under Fort Wayne's mayor, Henry P. Scherer. Besides belonging to county and state medical societies and the Academy of Medicine of Fort Wayne, he was also a professor of ophthalmology and otology in the Fort Wayne College of Medicine. He was a Democrat and the Allen County coroner from April 1882-November 1884. He married Anna J. Pontius in July 1913. In 1917, during World War I, he was surgeon-captain under Dr. Allen Hamilton along with other leading physicians and Red Cross nurses who formed Hospital Unit M, fully equipped for service in France.

John Davis Wheelock was a druggist at the age of 27 and became a farmer. He lived in St. Joseph township, Allen County, Indiana. He married Rachel ? (1864, 2-8-1952) They had one child.

Although there were several doctors in the Wheelock family, they were plagued by early deaths. Frontier life was tough.



John D. Wheelock 1853-1921
 Rachel his wife 1864-1952
 Photos by Bob Schmidt

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