SPOKESMAN OF FRONTIER DEMOCRACY:
Albert Gallatin in the Pennsylvania Assembly

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I

"T"HE details of State politics are not a subject of great interest to the general public, even in their freshest condition," Henry Adams wrote in his *Life of Albert Gallatin*, "and the local politics of Pennsylvania in 1790 are no exception to this law."1 It was in this spirit that he skimmed over Gallatin's four terms in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives in the volume which, published in 1879, remains the standard biography of the great American statesman, financier, and diplomat.2 This is a pity, because only by a careful examination of these formative years, 1790 to 1795, is it possible to understand how the Swiss-born Gallatin learned the intricacies of American political life; how he formulated the democratic philosophy which he was to carry into practice as one of the foremost leaders of the Jeffersonian movement.

For a man who became the moving spirit of the Pennsylvania legislature during the years he was a member, Gallatin had a remarkable background. Born at Geneva in 1761, he was the scion of an aristocratic family that traced its ancestry back to the thirteenth century. As a boy he had known the great Voltaire, a

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2 Adams' cursory account appears in op. cit., pp. 84-98, 105-107, 140-144. The account in the only other biography of Gallatin, John A. Stevens, *Albert Gallatin* (Boston, 1883), pp. 45-57, 96-98, is a digest of that given by Adams.
close friend of his grandmother; as a youth, he had absorbed the philosophy of Rousseau and the Physiocrats while a student at the famous Academy in his native city. Hope of finding a Rousseau-esque democracy in the New World had led him at the age of nineteen to run away to America. For the next decade his career had been aimless and checkered: a year of tutoring students in French at Harvard College; a winter as a trader on the Maine frontier; and half a dozen years as interpreter and partner of a French land speculator, an occupation that took him frequently to New York, Philadelphia, Richmond, western Virginia, and western Pennsylvania. Finally, in 1785, he had leased a farm and set himself up as a storekeeper near the meeting of the Monongahela River and Georges Creek in Fayette County in southwestern Pennsylvania.

It was to be expected that Gallatin, in whose veins flowed the blood of five chief magistrates of Geneva, should be attracted by the political activity of the area in which he had settled. Politics were in the air in the rugged mountains and narrow valleys of western Pennsylvania; and the Scotch-Irish, who with English Quakers comprised the population of Fayette County, thrived on it. Naturally enough for a man who had cherished the dreams of Rousseau, Gallatin associated himself with the political group which dominated western Pennsylvania, the state Constitutional Party. Since Revolutionary times, when the Constitutionalists, under the leadership of Benjamin Franklin, Joseph Reed, and George Bryan, had secured the adoption of Pennsylvania's ultra-democratic Constitution of 1776, the party had appealed to the common man—the farmer, the mechanic, the small tradesman. Certain western Pennsylvanians were numbered among the leaders of the party: the unlearned but shrewd weaver, William Findley of Westmoreland County; the staunch but cautious democrat, David Redick of Washington County; and the vigorous, Irish-born John Smilie, a neighbor of Gallatin's in Fayette County.


For about half a dozen years the power of the Constitutionalists had been declining; since 1786 they had been unable to control the state government. These circumstances made them anxious to make use of a man of Gallatin's obvious talents and education, even though he was a foreigner and spoke with a thick French accent.

Gallatin made his debut in political life in September 1788, when he joined his neighbor Smilie in representing Fayette County at a party convention in Harrisburg to propose amendments to the newly adopted federal Constitution. The Pennsylvania Constitutionalists had resisted the adoption of the federal instrument, partly because of what they considered its undemocratic, centralizing features, partly because it was advocated by their opponents in state politics. In the Harrisburg convention Gallatin played a surprisingly large rôle for a newcomer, submitting a set of resolutions which were adopted, in a modified form.

The following year Gallatin and Smilie represented Fayette again, this time at a state convention in Philadelphia. The convention had been convoked by the "Federalists," the opponents of the Constitutionalists, in the flush of their success with the federal Constitution. The purpose of the convention was the revision of the state Constitution of 1776 to make it "conform" with the new federal instrument. Even among the exceptionally able group of men who drew up this new state Constitution of 1790, Gallatin stood out as a leader. He pleaded for democratic measures —popular election of state senators, a large representation in the lower house, wider guarantees of liberty for the press, a

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more extensive franchise, and a greater equity in law. Of these proposals only the first was accepted by the conservatively-minded convention.  

II

What Gallatin said and did in the Harrisburg Convention and at the state constitutional convention, the ideas he expounded while going about his farming and store-keeping pleased his Fayette neighbors. In October 1790, when they went to the polls to elect two representatives to the newly created lower house of the Pennsylvania legislature, about two-thirds of the votes they cast were for him. In 1791 and again in 1792 they re-elected him without opposition. Gallatin did not stand for re-election to the state legislature in October 1793, since he had been elected, in the preceding February, to represent Pennsylvania in the United States Senate. When the Senate voted him ineligible because he "had not been a citizen of the United States for nine years," as required by the federal Constitution, Gallatin again ran for assemblyman on October 14, 1794. He was elected without opposition.

Gallatin's service in the 1794-1795 session was very brief. This was in consequence of the so-called "Whiskey Rebellion"—the uprising against enforcement of the federal excise on distilled liquor which burst out during 1794 in the four Pennsylvania counties west of the Allegheny Mountains. At the start of the session a group of western Pennsylvanians protested the seating of assemblymen from the four counties on the ground that those counties had been in a state of "insurrection" when the elections

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7 Gallatin's notes for his speeches on these subjects are in the Gallatin Papers, New-York Historical Society, New York City, Volume XV. The minutes of the convention are in Proceedings Relative to Calling the Conventions of 1776 and 1790 (Harrisburg, 1825), pp. 137-384. Brief secondary accounts may be found in Brunhouse, op. cit., pp. 225-227; and Ferguson, op. cit., pp. 103-109.

8 Gallatin Papers, Volume XV; Pennsylvania House Journal, 1790-1791, p. 4.

9 Pennsylvania House Journal, 1791-1792, p. 4; 1792-1793, p. 4. In 1792 Gallatin received 796 votes. There is no indication of any votes against him in the notations on a scrap of paper in the Gallatin Papers, Volume IV.

10 Adams, op. cit., pp. 119, 120.

11 Pittsburgh Gazette, November 1, 1794.
were held.\textsuperscript{12} In spite of a notably able defending speech by Gallatin, the Federalist majority in the House on January 9, 1795 voted to unseat him and the other Westerners.\textsuperscript{13} New elections were held on February 3. Gallatin and all but one of the other western assemblymen were re-elected.\textsuperscript{14} He took his seat eleven days later, but had served hardly a month when personal business affairs called him away.\textsuperscript{15} Thus, all in all, Gallatin served three full terms—1790 to 1793—and about five weeks of a fourth term in 1794-1795.

Gallatin was thus repeatedly returned to the Assembly because he proved himself both a practical politician and a statesman. The sessions of the legislature kept him in Philadelphia each year from early December through April and some years he had to return for a short session in August; but he was at home most of the time between late spring and early December. On Georges Creek or in Philadelphia, he lived and breathed politics. During his months at home—and particularly in the weeks immediately before the October elections—he frequented crossroad taverns and, at his own store, at his farmhouse and at those of his neighbors, he talked crops and politics. He journeyed occasionally to Uniontown, the county seat, to pick up his mail, to distribute party handbills, to put in a good word for the ticket, and incidentally to remind his constituents that he was a candidate himself. He was likely to spend election day at the tavern of Nicholas Riffle, the polling place for Springhill Township, greeting his neighbors as they came to cast their ballots.\textsuperscript{16} He was fond of calculating the results before election day and afterwards, as the returns came in. On the backs of letters and on small slips of paper he jotted down, in a tiny, wretched hand, figures based upon

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Pennsylvania House Journal}, 1794-1795, p. 170; \textit{Aurora}, January 31, February 16, 18, 1795.
\textsuperscript{15} Adams, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 142, 146.
\textsuperscript{16} This description of Gallatin electioneering is derived from Ferguson, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 48 ff., and Franklin Ellis, \textit{History of Fayette County, Pennsylvania} (Philadelphia, 1882), p. 770.
his observations in his own district and culled from his corre-
spondence.17

While in Fayette, Gallatin made it a practice to keep in touch
with politicians in other sections of the state. His pen was espe-
cially busy during the spring and summer of 1792, when his party
was feverishly trying to capture Pennsylvania's delegation in the
federal House of Representatives and was co-operating with anti-
Federalist groups in other states in an effort to replace John
Adams in the vice-presidency with a man whose philosophy was
"less aristocratic." During these months he exchanged political
data and counsel with Congressman William Findley; with the
Falstaffian spark plug of the Pennsylvania anti-Federalist group,
Dr. James Hutchinson of Philadelphia; with the tall and courtly
Secretary of the Commonwealth, Alexander James Dallas of
Philadelphia; and with a personal friend among the Federalists,
the hard-headed and vigorous Alexander Addison of Washington
County.18

Through his annual canvasses Gallatin was able to keep his
finger on the pulse of his constituency. But during the assembly
sessions, while he was three hundred miles away in Philadelphia,
his contact was more tenuous. His Fayette farmer neighbors were
not the articulate, literary sort of men who would sit down to
write their assemblyman unless they desired something very badly.
Moreover, Gallatin disliked writing letters himself, and discour-
age correspondents. He corresponded regularly with only two
personal friends, Thomas Clare, a neighbor on Georges Creek,
and John Badollet, an old Geneva schoolmate who now lived just
across the Monongahela River in Washington County. Both
Clare and Badollet kept him apprised of public opinion in the
West.19

17 See, for example, various scraps of paper in the Gallatin Papers,
Volume IV; also Alexander Addison to Gallatin, October 12, 1792 in
Gallatin Papers, Volume IV. Gallatin as a practical politician at work
among his neighbors is the theme of Russell J. Ferguson, "Albert Gallatin,
Western Pennsylvania Politician," Western Pennsylvania Historical Maga-
azine, XVI, pp. 183-195.
18 William Findley to Gallatin, August 20, 1792, [early September 1792?] to
Dr. James Hutchinson to Gallatin, September 25, October 24, 1792; A. J.
Dallas to Gallatin, September 25, 1792; Addison to Gallatin, October 11,
1792, all in Gallatin Papers, Volume IV. For an account of the election of
1792 in Pennsylvania, see Raymond Walters, Jr., "The Origins of the
Jeffersonian Party in Pennsylvania," Pennsylvania Magazine of History
and Biography, LXXI, pp. 440-458.
19 See Gallatin's letters to Clare and Badollet in Gallatin Papers, Volume
XV.
While in Philadelphia, Gallatin kept in touch with the other anti-Federalists. It is likely that he lodged at the rooming house of Major Alexander Boyd, on Sixth Street near Arch, long a favorite stopping-place for the Westerners of the group. Here, during meals and in the evenings he could exchange bits of gossip about legislative maneuvers and frontier sentiment with such fellow lodgers as Smilie and Findley, and such Philadelphia friends as Hutchinson and Dallas.  

Like any good practical politician, Gallatin performed errands for his constituents while he was in the state capital. Many of these chores entailed conferences with the state land officers, for Westerners were always troubled about warrants and titles. Many arose from the fact that Philadelphia was still the state's only metropolis, the most convenient place for buying merchandise and conducting financial transactions. Gallatin negotiated loans and paid bills, sometimes even advancing money out of his own purse. He bought such things as looking glasses, and made the arrangements necessary for shipping them across the Allegheny Mountains. He once remained in the capital a week after the legislature adjourned in order to attend to such errands.

During Gallatin's four terms in the Assembly he acquired, as he expressed it years later, "an extraordinary influence in that body, the more remarkable, as I was always in a party minority." During each of the sessions from 1790 to 1793, he was appointed to no less than forty committees. The reasons for this influence are obvious. The sixty-nine men who held seats in the House during these years were, on the whole, a mediocre lot. Exceptions were William Bingham, a highly successful Philadelphia businessman who was later to become a United States Senator, and William Findley, who was to make a creditable record in the federal

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22 Gallatin to Badollet, February 22, 1792, March 9, 1793, to Clare, December 1792, March 9, 1793 in Gallatin Papers, Volume XV.
23 Adams, *op. cit.*, p. 84.
24 *Pennsylvania House Journal*, 1790-1791, 1791-1792, 1792-1793, *passim*. Two small notebooks in the Gallatin Papers, Volume XV, which Gallatin kept during the first part of the 1790-1791 session, list 27 committees.
House of Representatives. Furthermore, turnover in the House membership was rapid. By his third term, less than one-third of the body had served as long as Gallatin.

Gallatin became, as he termed himself, “the laboring oar” of a host of committees. During almost all his waking hours he was absorbed in political work, at the State House during the day, at Major Boyd’s during the evening. For the committees of which he was a member during the 1791-1792 session, he later recalled that he “prepared all their reports, and drew all their bills.” In 1793 he complained to his friend Clare that the details of committee work were consuming all of his time, “owing to the very great indolence of our members this year.”

Some of Gallatin’s most effective work was conducted on the floor of the House. No member spoke more frequently. Nature had not been exactly generous in bestowing upon him the gifts necessary for a great legislative debater. To the casual observer, his appearance was unimpressive, though not unattractive. Although he was barely thirty, he had already started to lose his reddish-brown hair. His thin face, his long, hooked nose and pointed chin, his lean figure made him look taller than he actually was; but during debate he was apt to surrender this advantage by bending over his desk toward the presiding officer, “sawing the air” with a perpendicular movement of his right arm to emphasize his points. He spoke slowly and haltingly, with a pronounced French accent. Brevity was not one of his virtues. He occasionally spoke without interruption for as long as three hours.

But these were superficial shortcomings. Long speeches were common in the Pennsylvania Assembly; and his colleagues soon discovered that, although his accent was Gallic, his phrases were excellent idiomatic English. With a sheet of mathematically log-

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29 Gallatin to Clare, March 9, 1793 in Gallatin Papers, Volume XV.
31 Thomas Twining, *Travels in America 100 Years Ago* (New York, 1894), pp. 51, 52.
32 *Diary of Jacob Hiltzheimer* (Philadelphia, 1893), pp. 173, 190, 211.
ical notes before him, he could become almost eloquent. Once Bingham, the Federalist speaker of the Assembly, announced that Gallatin's detailed and acutely reasoned argument against his party's stand on a certain issue had so impressed him, that he would not attempt to answer it until he had carefully investigated the question anew. Another Federalist stalwart, Assemblyman Jacob Hiltzheimer of Philadelphia, confided to his diary that he considered Gallatin's speeches "masterly," his arguments "very forcible." As an Assemblyman, Gallatin performed his share of the routine duties that fall to all legislative leaders. He served on committees to frame and deliver the reply of the House to the annual message of Governor Thomas Mifflin. He conferred with representatives of the Senate on questions affecting both houses. He framed lists of the House's unfinished business and recommended dates for the adjournment of its sessions. But besides his work as an able public financier, his chief contributions to the Assembly and to Pennsylvania political life were made as an eloquent spokesman of the political and economic objectives of the western frontiersman.

III

As a true representative of the people of Fayette County, Gallatin devoted himself to the problems that perennially troubled the pioneering western farmer—the repeal of the state and federal excises upon distilled liquor; the protection of the frontier against Indian raids; and the construction of roads and canals to improve westward transportation. He worked tirelessly to increase the influence of his section in the political life of the state and nation.

On none of these questions did Gallatin represent the views of his constituents more faithfully and more vigorously than on the excise. An excise on distilled liquor was an old story to Pennsylvanians; it is probable that the state had had some tax of this sort since 1684. At the time Gallatin entered the legislature, the state's nineteenth excise law was on the statute books. Owing to

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Philadelphia American Daily Advertiser, September 6, 1791.
Diary of Hiltzheimer, pp. 173, 186.
Pennsylvania Archives, 9th Series, I, p. 10.
resistance against its enforcement west of the Alleghenies, however, it was virtually a dead letter in that part of the state.54

When Secretary Hamilton in the winter of 1790-1791 proposed a Federal excise as a means by which the national government might raise funds to finance his plan for the assumption of state debts, western Pennsylvanians opposed the suggestion to a man. The whiskey which they distilled from grain raised on their farms was not only their favorite tipple; it was their currency as well. They used it in barter with the Army post at Fort Pitt. They sent it on packhorses across the mountains to the East or on flatboats down the river to New Orleans in exchange for supplies. Thus Secretary Hamilton's excise would be a tax on their currency. To make their grievance the more acute, it was proposed that the excise be paid in money, of which they had little. Inasmuch as the great proportion of the whiskey produced in the United States was distilled in their region, the Westerners felt that they would be called upon to bear an unjust portion of the burden of the debt assumption plan—a scheme which seemed to them designed to fill the pockets of a few speculators in the eastern cities.35

Gallatin did not operate a still on his farm. He was not personally affected by the excise.36 But many of his neighbors and constituents were acutely concerned. Accordingly, he listened closely when Francis Gurney of Philadelphia, in January 1791, discussed the debates on the excise then taking place in Congress. Assemblyman Gurney urged that the legislature remonstrate "against any endeavour on the part of the United States to collect a revenue by means of excise, established upon principles subversive of the peace, liberty and rights of the citizens," and warned of "the singular spectacle of a nation magnanimously resisting the oppression of others, in order to enslave itself." He

35 Baldwin, op. cit., pp. 69-71; Raymond Walters, Jr., Alexander James Dallas, Lawyer, Politician, Financier (Philadelphia, 1943), p. 52. Some of the reasons for the opposition of the Westerners to the excise were stated in a petition which Gallatin framed for presentation to Congress in 1792. See Adams, op. cit., pp. 88, 89.
36 Fayette County Property Rolls, Springhill Township, 1789, 1793 in Assessment Room, Fayette County Court House, Uniontown, Pennsylvania.
proposed that these sentiments be forwarded to the United States senators from Pennsylvania.\textsuperscript{37}

In the prolonged and bitter argument which this resolution provoked, Gallatin took a leading part. Speaker Bingham had declared that although he did not necessarily approve of the proposed excise, inasmuch as the people of Pennsylvania had invested Congress with the right to levy excises through their adoption of the federal constitution, "they had no right to interfere in the present instance." To this Gallatin retorted that state legislatures had the right to remonstrate not only whenever the federal government actually exceeded its powers, but whenever it appeared that it might do so.

Gallatin described the excise as a particularly unjust form of taxation, and urged that a direct tax was better suited for the purposes of a republic. He estimated that an excise would take three times as much money out of the pockets of the people as a direct tax, owing to the manner in which the excisemen would make their collections. Furthermore, an excise "will bear hard upon the honest and industrious citizen, whilst the wealthy and conniving parts of the community will evade payment by various stratagems." In Pennsylvania, the western counties would have to pay a far greater share than the eastern counties. Gallatin was critical, too, of the purpose for which the excise was proposed, the assumption of state debts. "It is very true," he declared, "that we have given Congress the right of laying sufficient taxes to preserve the harmony of the union, but I wish to know whether this adopting an excise will not rather tend to the destruction of the union. I wish to know whether it is necessary to pay more than the debts of the country."\textsuperscript{38}

Gallatin questioned the constitutionality of the excise proposal in an amendment he submitted as the resolution came up for a final vote. "Every species of taxation, which shall operate, either directly or indirectly, as a duty on articles exported from any state," he declared in his statement, "is unconstitutional." The

\textsuperscript{37} Pennsylvania House Journal, 1790-1791, pp. 94, 95. In his Life of Albert Gallatin, Adams asserts (p. 87) that the resolution was "the very first legislative paper" which Gallatin "is believed to have drafted." The present writer has been unable to discover any evidence that Gallatin was the author of the resolution.

\textsuperscript{38} American Daily Advertiser, January 20, 22, 24, 1791.
amendment was voted down, however, and the resolution passed in its original form by the decisive vote of 40 to 16.49

The resolution turned out to be only a futile gesture. After prolonged debate, the state Senate refused its concurrence in the resolution by a nine-to-eight vote.49 Meanwhile, the federal House of Representatives passed the excise bill by a vote of 35 to 21.41 There is no record as to how the members of the federal Senate voted when the upper house passed the measure late in February, but it seems likely that Pennsylvania's senators split, Robert Morris voting for and William Maclay against the act. It is clear, however, that Maclay's vote was little influenced by the resolution of the state House of Representatives. The gloomily self-righteous junior senator wrote in his diary that Gallatin and the other proponents of the resolution had "nothing further in view" in advocating it, "than the securing themselves niches in the six-dollar temple of Congress"—an allusion to the daily pay of congressmen. "These popular measures," he continued, "are meant as the step-ladder to facilitate their ascent."42

At least as far as Gallatin was concerned, Maclay was a poor judge of character. Less than three months later Gallatin proposed to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives that, even though the state excise act was virtually a dead letter and would expire the following year at any rate, it ought to be definitely buried. His bill to repeal all state excise legislation became a law in September 1791.43

The attempts of the federal government to enforce Secretary Hamilton's excise agitated Pennsylvania political life during the next five years, culminating in the so-called "Whiskey Rebellion" of 1794. Gallatin continued, through moderate acts and utterance, to oppose enforcement of the measure. He even participated in public protest meetings in western Pennsylvania during Assembly recesses. But, after the state repealed its own excise, he never again debated the subject in the House.

As a frontiersman and land speculator, Gallatin quite naturally

took a keen interest in Pennsylvania's land policy during the years he was in the Assembly. In each of his terms he served on committees concerned with the problem, assuming the leading rôle in almost every instance.

In the early 1790's Pennsylvania possessed thousands of acres, mostly in the northwest part of the state, which it had acquired from the Penn family under the Divesting Act of 1779 but had never officially opened to settlement. East of the Alleghenies two views about this land were widely held. Many men viewed westward expansion with misgiving, fearing that it might lead to the depression of the value of their own holdings, the tightening of the labor market, and the decrease of their own influence in political life. But on the other hand, there was an influential group of business men who looked upon western lands as a field for profitable speculation. In the West, sentiment almost unanimously favored legislation which would open new areas to settlement, and produce an increase in the land values and political influence of the section.

It was not until his second term in the legislature that Gal- latin found his Assembly colleagues prepared to take constructive action.44 His motion to investigate the whole land question was adopted by the House, and he was appointed to a six-man committee to conduct it.45 The committee report, submitted to the House on January 6, 1792, proposed that virtually all vacant land within the state be opened to settlement immediately upon very liberal terms. Specifically, it suggested that any person, upon application to the land office, might obtain a warrant for 400 acres or less of any vacant land within the state, except that reserved for towns. A patent would be issued to the warrantee if he completed payment within a specified period. If the warrantee did not actually settle on his land within a certain time after the issuance of the warrant "and continue such settlement by actual residence or cultivation," the state would be free to grant the land to another warrantee. The price of land was to be low so as to increase the population of the state; but the report made no recommendation as to what the price should be.46

45 Pennsylvania House Journal, 1791-1792, pp. 31, 32, 35.
46 Pennsylvania House Journal, 1791-1792, pp. 69, 70, 75, 76.
Debate over a bill based upon the recommendations of the Gal-
latin committee caused the Easterners to reveal their ambitions
and prejudices toward the West. Samuel Maclay of Northumber-
land County argued that the land northwest of the Allegheny
River ought not be opened to settlement until the region east of
it was thickly populated. If the entire northwestern section of
the state were suddenly thrown open to settlement, he declared,
the frontier would be greatly expanded, necessitating the main-
tenance of a large standing army to defend it against the Indians.47
Cadwallader Evans of Montgomery County asserted that the
happiness of a country depended upon the compactness of settle-
ment, adding that the first settlers in a district were always
“banditti.” He urged omission of the restriction against absentee
landowners and tracts larger than 400 acres. If sales to land com-
panies and wealthy individuals were encouraged, settlement would
proceed in a more “orderly” fashion and defense would be easier
to accomplish. Besides, Evans added, the state was far more cer-
tain of receiving payment in full from monied individuals or cor-
porations than from imprudent actual settlers.48

Gallatin went to great pains to refute such arguments. He pro-
duced a map to demonstrate that the extent of the frontier area
would actually be contracted by the settlement of the state north-
west of the Allegheny. By establishing a post at Presqu’isle—the
site of the present-day Erie—and encouraging settlement in that
area, the state could cut communication between Pennsylvania
and the hostile Indians in the Northwest Territory. Gallatin cited
conditions in Europe to disprove Evans’ statement that compact
settlement produced a happy people. “The happiness of a country,”
he declared, “depends more . . . on the poorer class of people
having it in their power to become freeholders at a small expence,
and being able to live comfortably, and dependent only on their
industry and exertions.” He cited the character of the population
of the four western counties as proof that first settlers were not
always banditti. One-half of the first settlers in those counties still
lived there, he declared. Failure to open all the vacant lands to
settlement at once, he went on, would cause Pennsylvania to lose

47 Philadelphia General Advertiser, February 8, 1792.
48 General Advertiser, February 9, 1792; American Daily Advertiser,
February 10, 1792.
worthy citizens to other states. Since 1785 she had lost 50,000 persons owing to the "more enlightened policy" of Virginia and New York. This was a thing to consider, inasmuch as the weight of a state in Congress was determined by the size of its population. He was pleased, he added, that "the only class of people excluded by the bill, are such as wish to possess, without either forming settlements, or causing them to be formed."49

Gallatin's fellow Westerner, Thomas Scott of Washington County, protested that the proposal of Evans to encourage large absentee landholders would almost inevitably lead to an orgy of speculation. The incomplete records of the Assembly debates do not suggest that Gallatin was equally fearful of this possibility.

The issue was resolved by a compromise between the Westerners and the spokesmen for the eastern speculators. The legislature voted to open the entire state to settlement at attractively low rates. Lands northwest of the Ohio and the Allegheny were to be sold either to persons who would themselves perform the conditions of actual settlement, or would cause them to be settled by others.50 Only a few assemblymen from the southwestern part of the state cast negative ballots. The ambiguous phrases of this Act of April 3, 1792, produced a famous land litigation case that was to trouble Pennsylvania political life for more than a decade.51

When reports of an Indian uprising sent Gallatin scurrying home to Fayette County from a land surveying trip down the Ohio River valley during the summer of 1785, he learned from personal experience the terror which redskins on the warpath could strike in the heart of the frontiersman.52 That realization was sharpened by his years of residence in a pioneering community. Thus, when the northwestern tribes in 1790 banded together to push back the frontiersmen who were pouring 'into their hunting grounds, Assemblyman Gallatin took an earnest and personal interest in the problem of frontier defense. In March 1791 he was appointed to a joint House and Senate committee to confer with Governor Mifflin on measures to reinforce the half-hearted measures being

49 Ibid. Gallatin repeated some of these views in his letter to Badollet, February 22, 1793 in Gallatin Papers, Volume XV.
51 The case was that of the Holland Land Company, which is treated in detail in Paul D. Evans, The Holland Land Company (Buffalo, 1924), pp. 107-176.
52 Dater, op. cit., p. 34.
taken by the federal government. From the committee's deliberations came an act which appropriated £4,000 for the immediate defense of the frontier by the state militia.  

But by the middle of the following December, Gallatin, in the national capital, learned that the combined efforts of the federal and state governments had reached an alarming climax. Six weeks earlier, the report ran, an expedition of poorly equipped, ill-trained ne'er-do-wells, under the leadership of the ailing General Arthur St. Clair, had been completely routed by the Indians on the Wabash River. Gallatin reflected the gloom that pervaded Philadelphia in a letter he wrote to Badollet early in January. "Our frontiers are naked," he complained, "the Indians must be encouraged by their success, the preparations of the United States must take some time before they are compleated, & our present protection must [rest?] chiefly on the security we may derive from the season of the year & on the exertions of the people and on the State government."

In the crisis Governor Mifflin, it seemed to Gallatin, acted with "spirit, activity & earnestness." After a series of consultations with President George Washington and Secretary of War Henry Knox, the Governor presented a plan for co-operation between the federal and state governments to the House defense committee, of which Gallatin was a member. Under this scheme, fifty able woodsmen were to be hired as rangers by the lieutenants of militia of the western counties; 228 men were to be enlisted by the state for about six months' service in three militia companies.

The proposal placed both parties in something of a quandary. The anti-Federalists feared that such co-operation between the two governments might lead to the establishment of a standing army which, in Gallatin's words, "would load us with a monstrous expence." The Pennsylvania Federalists, although not as hostile to frontier interests as their allies in New England, were not particularly eager to aid the democratic West; but at the same time they were anxious to support any measure which might strengthen the national Federalist administration.

As it turned out, the Federalists found it more difficult to quiet

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39 Gallatin to Badollet, January 7, 1792 in Gallatin Papers, Volume XV.

40 Gallatin to Badollet, January 21, 1792 in Gallatin Papers, Volume XV.
their qualms than did Gallatin and his friends. During the House debates Cadwallader Evans asserted that the proposed appropriation was too high. William Bingham urged that action be postponed until more precise data on the need for defense became available. Under the terms of the federal constitution, he added, it was not clear whether a state possessed the right to raise troops. He suggested that an explanatory preamble be appended to the bill.

Gallatin met Evans' objection with the painstaking analysis that characterized all his discussions of financial matters, carefully building up a case for the proposed appropriation of £4,500. With some heat he observed that the constitutional right of a sovereign state to raise troops in time of war was so clear that the preamble suggested by Bingham would be gratuitous.

Gallatin's points, which were reiterated with less effectiveness by his fellow Westerners, won the approval of the House for the bill. A few days later the Senate voted its accord, and £4,500 was appropriated for the militia. Two months later, over the bitter opposition of the Federalists, Congress enacted legislation for defense measures by the federal government.

This legislation did not completely solve the Indian problem, as Gallatin learned while spending the spring and summer of 1792 at home in Fayette. Encouraged by their success in defeating St. Clair, the Indians renewed their war with a fresh series of horrors. From his friend Secretary of the Commonwealth Dallas at Philadelphia, Gallatin received a letter begging for details about the depredations and for recommendations as to additional defense measures. The little state army, Dallas reflected, "will certainly be insufficient to protect all the exposed Counties; and the mighty force of the Union, like all great bodies, moves very slow." Loyal to the state's chief executive, Dallas begged Gallatin and his western colleagues to point out to their constituents how keen was the Governor's interest in the defense problem.

The energetic purposefulness with which General Anthony

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66 General Advertiser, January 13, 1792; American Daily Advertiser, January 12, 14, 1792; Pennsylvania House Journal, 1791-1792, pp. 84, 87.
67 American Daily Advertiser, February 4, 1792; Pennsylvania House Journal, 1791-1792, p. 97; Pennsylvania Archives, 2nd Series, XIV, pp. 196-198; Cribbs, op. cit., p. 94; Dallas, op. cit., III, pp. 177, 178.
69 Dallas to Gallatin, May 4, 1792 in Gallatin Papers, Volume XV.
Wayne, the successor of St. Clair, drilled his troops served to reassure the Westerners, and defense did not become an issue at the 1792-1793 session of the Assembly. Indeed, prospects for peace were so bright that Gallatin introduced a bill for the survey of Presqu’isle which, it was planned, would be the chief settlement of northwestern Pennsylvania. The bill became law early in April. On the day after the United States Senate voted that Gallatin did not possess the qualifications necessary to sit in the federal upper house—March 1, 1794—Governor Mifflin named him to join William Irvine and Andrew Ellicott as commissioners to make the survey.

The expedition was cancelled at the last moment upon the request of Secretary Knox, who felt that it would complicate General Wayne’s war against the Indians. The victory of Wayne at Fallen Timbers in the summer of 1794, followed by the Treaty of Greenville the next year, brought a final peace to the Pennsylvania frontier, and made possible the survey of Presqu’isle in 1795. But by that time Gallatin had become a member of the federal House of Representatives and was busy with other matters.

As he jogged on horseback along the rough roads and mountain trails that connected his back-country home to the state capital to attend sessions of the legislature, Gallatin had ample opportunity to reflect upon a need keenly felt by all Westerners—better means of transportation. This concern was shared by the merchants of Philadelphia, who realized that if improvements were not made, the people west of the Alleghenies would use the Potomac and Susquehanna river systems to carry their trade to the enterprising young port of Baltimore. The Philadelphians had been agitating for internal improvements since 1783; in 1789 some of them founded the Society for Promoting the Improvement of Roads and Inland Navigation, of which Gallatin’s friend, Robert Morris, served as president.

Dallas, op. cit., III, pp. 346-348.
Thomas Mifflin to William Irvine, Andrew Ellicott, and Albert Gallatin, March 1, 1794 (copy), Mifflin to Irvine and Ellicott, March 1, 1794 in William Irvine Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Volume XI, nos. 6, 7; Pennsylvania Archives, 2nd Series, VI, p. 667.
Pennsylvania Archives, 2nd Series, VI, p. 668.
Ferguson, Early Western Pennsylvania Politics, pp. 3, 4.
Brunhouse, op. cit., p. 135.
Gallatin not only became a member of the Society while an assemblyman; he vigorously espoused the petitions it periodically presented to the legislature. In the spring of 1791 the Society submitted a detailed proposal for the construction of numerous highways and canals within the state. When the memorial came up for discussion in the House in April, Gallatin spoke at length in its favor. As the Philadelphia *General Advertiser* reported, “he dwelt on the advantages of connecting the Western and Eastern waters,” maintaining that “it would draw the produce of the Western parts to enrich the Eastern” and warning that “if the plan was not effected a great deal of the riches of that part of the state would go down the Potowmack.” Internal improvements “would naturally draw and encrease population in the improved parts.” He attributed “the present population and flourishing situation at Fort Pitt and the neighboring country, to the roads established for some time back from the Atlantic shore to the garrison at Fort Pitt.”

A few days later Gallatin and his fellow Fayette countian, State Senator John Smilie, urged these views upon Governor Mifflin through a letter.

When the Governor threw his influence behind the internal improvements movement, it acquired such momentum that during the 1790-1791 and 1791-1792 sessions no fewer than six House committees were appointed to deal with the question. On each of these Gallatin served. One of the committees reported to the House on March 14, 1791, that the construction of roads and canals was too expensive to be carried on by individuals, and the state was not rich enough to accomplish it, either. The report proposed that private stock companies be chartered to make such improvements. It was on the basis of this recommendation that, while Gallatin sat in the Assembly, the state chartered three companies—one to build a canal connecting the Schuylkill and Susquehanna rivers, another to build a canal linking the Delaware and Schuylkill rivers, and a third to construct an artificial road between Philadelphia and

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*General Advertiser*, April 7, 1791.
Gallatin and John Smilie to Governor Mifflin, April 21, 1791, cited Plummer, *op. cit.*, p. 39.
The Philadelphia-Lancaster road, incidentally, was the first turnpike in the United States constructed entirely at private expense.

In two notable instances Gallatin showed himself eager to increase the power of his western constituents in the political life of Pennsylvania and the nation. In one, he led a movement for legislation providing for the election of Pennsylvania’s members in the federal House of Representatives by districts rather than by a state-wide ticket, thus making possible a more faithful representation of the various sections of the state.\(^2\)

In another case he bespoke the distrust which he and his fellow Westerners felt toward Philadelphia as a seat of “luxury” and “aristocracy.” When the federal government moved to Philadelphia in 1790, it had been specified that the capital was to be moved to the banks of the Potomac at the end of a decade. A group of enterprising Philadelphians, however, undertook to tempt Congress into voting to remain by urging that the state build magnificent accommodations for the federal government and the President of the United States. When such proposals reached the House, Gallatin spoke vigorously against them, insisting that the federal government must move at the appointed time.\(^3\)

Like other Westerners, Gallatin was anxious that, since population was moving in their direction, the state capital be moved farther west. Whenever Philadelphians argued that the elaborate buildings they were proposing be built could be used by the state when the federal government moved, Gallatin retorted that this would “tie the legislature forever to the city.” The “tone of luxury” which pervaded the city had already made it necessary to increase the salaries of the state officers. This “ostentatious display of wealth” really troubled him, as is evidenced by a complaint he made about it in a letter to his friend Badollet.\(^4\)


\(^3\) Philadelphia \textit{Federal Gazette}, February 7, 1791; \textit{General Advertiser}, March 8, 1791; Dallas, \textit{op. cit.}, III, pp. 15-17.


\(^5\) \textit{General Advertiser}, April 8, 9, 1791; \textit{Pennsylvania House Journal}, 1794-1795, p. 210; Gallatin to Badollet, February 22, 1792 in Gallatin Papers, Volume XV.
One problem which troubled the Pennsylvania legislature during all of Gallatin's first three terms—and one whose outcome was to affect his own career enormously—was the election of a successor to the asperic William Maclay, whose term as United States senator expired on March 3, 1791. In this problem party, sectional, and constitutional issues were inextricably interwoven.\(^7\)

Although every other state in the union was electing its federal senators by a joint vote (both houses of the legislature sitting together), certain Federalist state senators from the eastern counties saw in the silence of the Pennsylvania constitution on the subject an opportunity to augment the power of their house, party, and section. They insisted that the election of a successor to Maclay must be accomplished by a concurrent vote (the two houses sitting separately).

From the spring of 1791 to the spring of 1793 the legislature remained deadlocked over the question. In the efforts of the House to break the impasse, Gallatin played a leading part. He succeeded in getting the House to go on record in favor of the joint vote.\(^6\)

He served on House committees to confer with Senate committees.\(^7\) He spoke long and eloquently on the subject, warning of the danger that lay in permitting six men in the Senate to deprive the state of representation in the federal upper house,\(^7\) and urging that a joint vote was closest to the true spirit of election, because by it men might vote not merely as members of the House

\(^7\) The present writer cannot agree with Frank F. Stephens when he declares that the "contest was at heart a political one. The majority in the senate was Federal, in the house, Republican." ("The Transitional Period, 1788-1789, in the Government of the United States," *University of Missouri Studies*, Social Science Studies, II, No. 4 [1909], p. 15). The fact is that at this time the Federalists had a majority in both houses. Richard Hildreth's explanation (*History of the United States* [New York, 1880], IV, p. 448) that the dispute was "sectional . . . , the western portion of the state insisting upon its right to be represented" comes nearer the truth, but does not tell the whole story, either. William Bingham, the Philadelphia Federalist leader, took the position which Stephens would have us believe was Republican, Hildreth would say was Western. Moreover, the Senate—presumably predominantly Federalist and Eastern in sentiment—voted for a western Federalist, James Ross, for United States senator in 1793.


\(^7\) *Pennsylvania House Journal*, 1790-1791, p. 452; 1791-1792, pp. 74, 243.

\(^8\) *General Advertiser*, December 17, 1791.
or Senate, but as individuals. When the Senate attempted, in January 1793, to force the lower house to agree to a fait accompli by voting James Ross of Washington County as its choice, he protested that its action was not only "high-handed," but "unconstitutional," and won the support of his House colleagues on a resolution to that effect.

The deadlock was broken on February 19, 1793, when enough of the obstinate senators absented themselves to allow the upper house to pass a resolution calling for a joint vote of the two houses.

While the political cauldron boiled during the next few days, the anti-Federalists held a caucus to determine who they should support in the balloting. Gallatin's name immediately came to the fore. Gallatin sprang to his feet to deny any desire for the office, and to declare that there were a number of other men far more deserving. He added that he doubted whether he had been a citizen of Pennsylvania long enough to qualify. After the meeting broke up, his friends urged him to reconsider, maintaining that he was the only "person of truly Republican principles" who had a chance of election. This argument and a rereading of the federal constitution caused Gallatin to change his mind. He had been a citizen of the United States for more than nine years, he believed, and that made him qualified for the seat. Accordingly, when his name was presented at a second party caucus a few days later, he accepted the nomination, which was extended by an almost unanimous vote.

The election was held in the Senate chamber at high noon of February 28, 1793. Although four men were nominated (Gallatin himself proposing the name of William Irvine), it became a contest between Gallatin and the Federalist choice, Henry Miller of York County. Gallatin received 45 votes in the viva voce polling; Miller received 35; Irvine and Arthur St. Clair one each. The vote was not divided on party or sectional lines.

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79 American Daily Advertiser, December 17, 1792; Gazette of the United States, December 19, 1792.
80 Pennsylvania House Journal, 1792-1793, pp. 105, 106, 120, 121; American Daily Advertiser, January 23, 1793; General Advertiser, February 1, 1793.
82 Annals of Congress, 3rd Cong., pp. 58-60; Gallatin to Clare, March 9, 1793 in Gallatin Papers, Volume XV.
ever, the bulk of Gallatin’s support came from central and western Pennsylvania.88

The election of Gallatin, as he wrote to Clare, “exceedingly mortified” the extreme Federalists.84 Several of his supporters later asserted that they had been threatened by Federalists in the streets and taverns of Philadelphia both before and after the election. A month after the election two die-hard Federalists rose in the House to dispute the right of Gallatin to continue serving in the legislature when he was senator-elect; but none of the other assemblymen responded to the idea.85 A Federalist with literary aspirations sarcastically suggested in a bit of doggerel published in the Gazette of the United States that an intriguing group had succeeded, through illegitimate though legal means, in forcing an alien upon the citizens of Pennsylvania as their representative in the federal senate.86

But Gallatin, always a modest man of clear perspective, sized up the true situation when he wrote: “It was my constant assiduity to business and the assistance derived from it by many members which enabled the Republican [anti-Federalist] party in the Legislature, then a minority on a joint ballot, to elect me, and no other but me of that party, Senator of the United States.”87 The Federalist Jacob Hiltzheimer of Philadelphia expressed the feeling of the majority of his colleagues when he confided to his diary: “The next House will miss him very much. . . .”88

V

As preparation for his later career as United States senator and representative, as Secretary of the Treasury under Jefferson and Madison, and as American minister to France and Great Britain, Gallatin's four terms as a representative of the frontier west were of inestimable value. He never really mastered or enjoyed the

82 General Advertiser, March 1, 1793; American Daily Advertiser, March 1, 1793; Pennsylvania Senate Journal, 1792-1793, pp. 138-141.
83 Gallatin to Clare, March 9, 1793 in Gallatin Papers, Volume XV. According to Alexander McKeehan of Carlisle, the “Great people” of central Pennsylvania were also “mortified” by the election of an “Antifederal” senator. Alexander McKeehan to William Findley, March 6, 1793 in Irvine Papers, Volume XI, no. 79.
84 Pennsylvania House Journal, 1792-1793, pp. 325, 326.
85 Gazette of the United States, March 16, 1793.
86 Adams, op. cit., p. 86.
87 Diary of Hiltzheimer, p. 190.
game of practical party politics; but all through his life—and especially during his seven years in Congress—he benefited from the lessons in the arts of persuasion and compromise which he had learned while canvassing votes in Fayette County farm houses, while chatting with brother anti-Federalists in Philadelphia boarding houses, while addressing fellow assemblymen from the floor of the state House of Representatives.

In certain respects, the situation of the federal government resembled that of the state government; and for that reason as a congressman and as Secretary of the Treasury Gallatin advocated many of the same public policies he had advocated as an assemblyman. His conviction that excises were inordinately costly to collect and vexatious to the people prompted him to obtain their repeal when he became head of the Treasury Department. By selling its vast tracts of public land, Pennsylvania had been able to pay off its debts completely. In Congress and in the cabinet Gallatin urged that the federal government sell its lands in the Old Southwest and Old Northwest toward the same end, and personally developed an efficient land system to carry out the program. As an assemblyman he had been fearful that a large militia might delay paying off the Commonwealth's debt and endanger the liberty of the people; as a congressman and cabinet member he was, for the same reasons, reluctant to establish a large Army and Navy to cope with threats from France and Great Britain. As Pennsylvania paid off its debt, he became more and more interested in the encouragement of public education and internal improvements by the state; as the prospect that the federal government would soon have an excess of revenue loomed in 1807, Secretary Gallatin joined President Jefferson in urging the establishment of a national university and the building of an extensive network of turnpikes and canals.

Almost all men whose participation in public life is long and active grow more conservative with the years, trimming their sails and shifting their courses to meet the changing winds of political fortune. It is eloquent testimony to the integrity of Albert Gallatin that, although his ideas developed as he grew older and more experienced, the basic beliefs he enunciated in the Pennsylvania Assembly, between the ages of twenty-nine and thirty-four, remained his guiding principles to the end of his life.