



In the spring of 1776, near the end of a letter Abigail Adams wrote to her husband John (who would help to draft America's Declaration of Independence from Britain), Abigail warned her husband to treat women fairly in the new government which he and his colleagues were forming:

In the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could. If perticular care and attention is not paid to the Laidies we are determind to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation.

When John Adams responded (on April 14, 1776) that “we know better than to repeal our masculine systems,” future American women were forced to do exactly what Abigail had predicted.

This image depicts a portrait of Abigail Adams—by Benjamin Blyth of Salem, Massachusetts—in 1766 (approximately ten years before the Declaration of Independence).

The Library of Congress provides a brief biography of Abigail Smith Adams (scroll down about halfway on the LOC link):

On October 25, 1764, Abigail Smith married a young lawyer from Braintree (now Quincy), Massachusetts, by the name of John Adams, who would become, some thirty years later, the second president of the United States.

Their union launched a vital and long-lived partnership of fifty-four years, which carried the couple from colonial Boston to Philadelphia and the politics of revolution; to Paris and London and the world of international diplomacy; and finally to New York , Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C., where in November, 1800 they became the first presidential couple to occupy the newly built White House in the nation’s new capital.

Among their five children, John Quincy Adams would also become a U.S. president. For almost two centuries, Abigail Smith Adams remained the only American who was both the wife and the mother of a president, a distinction she now shares with Barbara Bush.

Abigail Adams is perhaps best remembered for her letters, written especially to her husband during long periods of separation, but also to her larger network of family members and friends, such as Mercy Otis Warren and Thomas Jefferson.

The daughter of a Congregational minister born in 1744 in Weymouth, Massachusetts, the young Abigail received a sophisticated though largely informal education, fueled by the presence of many books and frequent visitors in her home. John Adams was one such visitor, and their earliest letters document a witty and affectionate courtship spanning several years.

In married life, Abigail Adams proved a talented chronicler of significant events, combining a broad knowledge of history and politics with perceptive commentary and a keen eye for detail. Her letters comprise an important account of key events in the United States’ early history as a nation.

Adams and her husband corresponded regularly during the course of his many absences from home, first as a circuit judge in Massachusetts and then, most famously, while he attended the Continental Congress in Philadelphia.

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