

Adams Family

Samuel Adams and John Adams were second cousins. Abigail Adams was John Adams' third cousin. John Quincy Adams was the son of John and Abigail.

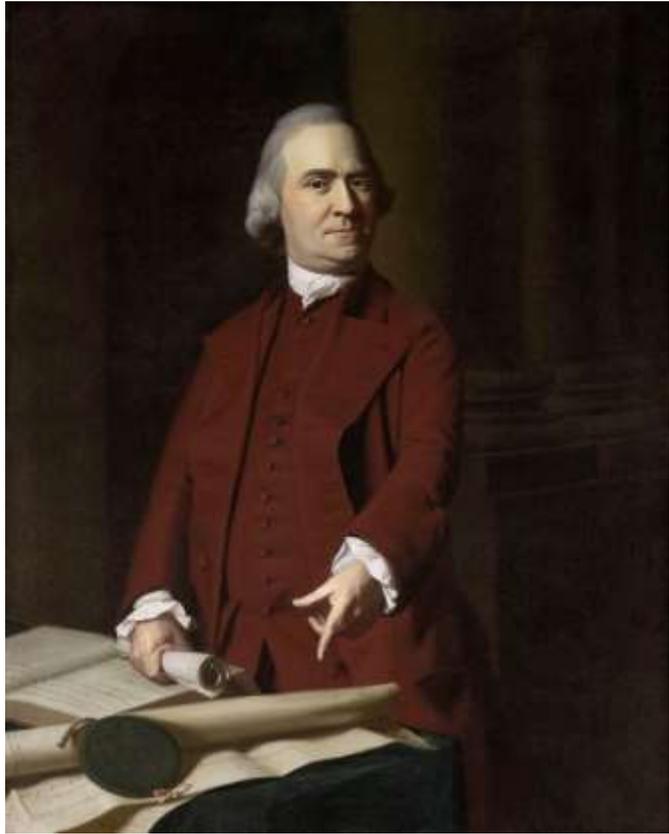
Samuel Adams

This gentleman is a singular character he is I believe the only surviving male of his Grandfather the late governor of Massachusetts Samuel Adams who never had but two children a son and a daughter;

his son who bore his name died early a surgeon in the army of the Revolution - without issue; his daughter married a Mr. Welles and her only son as I believe is your correspondent Samuel Adams Welles;

he is now virtuously amiably and laudably employed in collecting memorials of his grandfather, in which I heartily wish him success;

his grandfathers character however will never be accurately known to posterity as it never was sufficiently known to its own age: his merit in the Revolution if there was any merit in it was and is beyond all calculation. I know but one superior to it and that was James Otis.



As your correspondent is the only representative of him I feel a strong interest in his favour; he was bred a merchant has talents industry a taste for letters

and a fair unspotted and irreproachable character I wish you would speak a good word for him to Mr Munroe I believe him well qualified to be a commissioner under the Spanish treaty to Adjust the - American claims for spoliations on our commerce and I believe the appointment would be more popular in Massachusetts than any other that could be named - except among the old tory refugees and their rancorous disciples.

(John Adams speaking of Samuel Adams in a letter to Thomas Jefferson, May 27, 1819)

The elusiveness of the character of Samuel Adams has allowed for a wide interpretation of his place and influence in American Revolution. Prominent American Revolution histories rarely discuss Adams at length and there are few biographies about him.

Samuel Adams' description in history goes from heroic "Father of the Revolution" to zealot and propagandist directing mobs to a complex man who greatly influenced the American Revolution. (Perkins)

From a speech Samuel Adams delivered at the State House in Philadelphia on August 1, 1776,

If ye love wealth greater than liberty, the tranquility of servitude greater than the animating contest for freedom, go home from us in peace.

We seek not your counsel, nor your arms. Crouch down and lick the hand that feeds you; May your chains set lightly upon you, and may posterity forget that ye were our countrymen.

Samuel Adams, (born September 27 [September 16, Old Style], 1722, Boston, Massachusetts - died October 2, 1803, Boston) was a politician of the American Revolution, leader of the Massachusetts "radicals," a delegate to the Continental Congress (1774–81) and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. He was later lieutenant governor (1789–93) and governor (1794–97) of Massachusetts.

Samuel Adams was graduated from Harvard College in 1740 and briefly studied law; he failed in several business ventures. As a tax collector in Boston, he neglected to collect the public levies and to keep proper accounts, thus exposing himself to suit.

Although unsuccessful in conducting personal or public business, Adams took an active and influential part in local politics. By the time the English Parliament passed the Sugar Act (1764) taxing molasses for revenue, Adams was a powerful figure in the opposition to British authority in the colonies.

He denounced the act, being one of the first of the colonials to cry out against taxation without representation. He played an important part in instigating the Stamp Act riots in Boston that were directed against the new requirement to pay taxes on all legal and commercial documents, newspapers, and college diplomas.

His influence was soon second only to James Otis, the lawyer and politician who gained prominence by his resistance to the revenue acts.

In 1769 Adams assumed the leadership of the Massachusetts radicals. There is some reason to believe that he had committed himself to American independence a year earlier. Elected to the lower house of the Massachusetts general court from Boston, Adams served in that body until 1774.

Samuel Adams was one of the first American leaders to deny Parliament's authority over the colonies, and he was also one of the first—certainly by 1774—to establish independence as the proper goal.

John Adams described his cousin as a plain, modest, and virtuous man. But in addition, Samuel Adams was a propagandist who was not overscrupulous in his attacks upon British officials and policies, and a passionate politician as well.

In innumerable newspaper letters and essays over various signatures, he described British measures and the behavior of royal governors, judges, and customs men in the darkest colors. He was a master of organization, arranging for the election of men who agreed with him, procuring committees that would act as he wished, and securing the passage of resolutions that he desired.

During the crisis over the Townshend duties (1767–70), the import taxes on previously duty-free products proposed by Cabinet Minister Charles Townshend, Adams was unable to persuade the Massachusetts colonists to take extreme steps, partly because of the moderating influence of Otis.

British troops sent to Boston in 1768, however, offered a fine target for this propaganda, and Adams saw to it that they were portrayed in the colonial newspapers as brutal soldiery oppressing citizens and assailing their wives and daughters.

He was one of the leaders in the town meeting that demanded and secured the removal of the troops from Boston after some British soldiers fired into a mob and killed five Americans (Boston Massacre).

During the years 1770–73, when other colonial leaders were inactive, Adams revived old issues and found new ones; he was responsible for the foundation (1772) of the Committee of Correspondence of Boston that kept in contact with similar bodies in whose establishment he also had a hand in other towns. These committees later became effective instruments in the fight against the British.

The passage by Parliament of the Tea Act of 1773, which granted the East India Company a monopoly on tea sales in the colonies, gave Adams ample opportunity to exercise his remarkable talents. Although he did not participate in the Boston Tea Party, he was undoubtedly one of its planners.

He was again a leading figure in the opposition of Massachusetts to the execution of the Intolerable (Coercive) Acts passed by the British Parliament in retaliation for the dumping of tea in Boston Harbor, and, as a member of the First Continental Congress, which spoke for the 13 colonies, he insisted that the delegates take a vigorous stand against Britain.

A member of the provincial congress of Massachusetts in 1774–75, he participated in making preparations for warfare should Britain resort to arms. When the British troops marched out of Boston to Concord, Adams and the president of the Continental Congress, John Hancock, were staying in a farmhouse near the line of march, and it has been said that the arrest of the two men was one of the purposes of the expedition.

As a member of the Continental Congress, in which he served until 1781, Adams was less conspicuous than he was in town meetings and the Massachusetts legislature, for the congress contained a number of men as able as he.

He and John Adams were among the first to call for a final separation from Britain, both signed the Declaration of Independence, and both exerted considerable influence in the congress.

Adams was a member of the convention that framed the Massachusetts constitution of 1780 and also sat in the convention of his state that ratified the Federal Constitution. He was at first an anti-Federalist who opposed the ratification of the Constitution for fear that it would vest too much power in the federal government, but he finally abandoned his opposition when the Federalists promised to support a number of future amendments, including a bill of rights.

He was defeated in the first congressional election. Returning to political power as a follower of Hancock, he was lieutenant governor of Massachusetts from 1789 to 1793 and governor from 1794 to 1797. When national parties developed, he affiliated himself with the Democratic Republicans, the followers of Thomas Jefferson. After being defeated as a presidential elector favoring Jefferson in 1796, he retired to private life.

Elizabeth Checkley Adams

Elizabeth Checkley Adams, the first wife of Samuel Adams, was the daughter of Rev. Samuel Checkley, pastor of the New South Church in Boston.

The elder Checkley and the father of Samuel Adams were life-long friends, and it is said that it was the influence of the elder Adams that secured the appointment of his friend to the pastorate.

Consequently, it brought satisfaction to both families when it was found that the young people had married in October, 1749.

She was twenty-four years old at the time and, as her daughter has written, "was a rare example of virtue and piety blended with a retiring and modest demeanour and the charms of elegant womanhood."

The families of Adams and Checkley had been connected by marriage in the previous century, Captain John Adams having married Hannah, daughter of Anthony Checkley, first Attorney-General of the Province under the New Charter, and an ancestor of Rev. Samuel Checkley.



Elizabeth Checkley's mother, was a Rolph, daughter of Rev. Benjamin Rolfe, minister at Haverhill, at the time of the "Sack of Haverhill" by the Indians in 1708. In this fighting the minister was killed, together with about one hundred other persons, and many more were carried away.

According to Drake's History of Boston, a maid-servant in the employ of Rev. Mr. Rolfe saved the two little daughters of the minister by her bravery and presence of mind. She overheard the Indians breaking into the house and, springing from her bed, took the two little girls, Elizabeth and Mary, aged respectively nine and eleven years, and hurried them into the cellar where she secreted them under two large tubs.

They were not found, though the savages ransacked the whole house. It was one of these little girls, Elizabeth, who afterward became the wife of Rev. Samuel Checkley, and mother of Elizabeth Checkley who married Samuel Adams.

Five children were born to Samuel and Elizabeth Adams, only two of whom came to maturity, Samuel, Jr., and Hannah. On July 25, 1757, at the age of thirty-two, Elizabeth died soon after giving birth to a stillborn son. After this date in the family Bible were written, in the hand of Samuel Adams:

To her husband she was as sincere a friend as she was a faithful wife. Her exact economy in all her relative capacities, her kindred on his side as well as her own admire.

She ran her Christian race with remarkable steadiness and finished in triumph! She left two small children. God grant they may inherit her graces!

Elizabeth "Betsy" Wells Adams

On December 6, 1764, forty-two-year-old Samuel Adams married Elizabeth Wells, the twenty-nine-year-old daughter of his good friend, Francis Wells, an English merchant who came to Boston with his family in 1723. They had no children, but Elizabeth helped raise Samuel and Hannah, the surviving children of the first Mrs. Adams.

Elizabeth Wells Adams was a pleasant and hard-working woman who, through the forty years of life that remained to Sam, supported him in every way. She turned out to be a good manager. While he nurtured the birth of Independence, he was quite careless about his home and the condition of his own children's clothes and shoes. (History of American Women)

A letter from Samuel to Elizabeth Adams (Philadelphia, June 28, 1775) said,

My Dearest Betsy,

Yesterday I received Letters from some of our Friends at the Camp informing me of the Engagement between the American troops and the Rebel Army at Charlestown. I cannot but be greatly rejoiced at the tried Valor of our Countrymen, who by all Accounts behaved with an intrepidity becoming those who fought for their Liberties against the mercenary Soldiers of a Tyrant.

It is painful to me to reflect on the Terror I suppose you were under, on hearing the Noise of War so near. Favor me, my dear, with an Account of your Apprehensions at that time, under your own hand. I pray God to cover the heads of our Countrymen in every day of Battle, and ever to protect you from Injury in these distracted times.

The Death of our truly amiable and worthy Friend Dr. [Joseph] Warren is greatly afflicting; the language of Friendship is, how shall we resign him; but it is our Duty to submit to the Dispensations of Heaven 'whose ways are ever gracious and just.' He fell in the glorious Struggle for public Liberty.

Remember me to my dear Hannah and sister Polly and to all Friends... [General Thomas] Gage has made me respectable by naming me first among those who are to receive no favor from him. I thoroughly despise him and his proclamation... The Clock is now striking twelve. I therefore wish you good Night.

Yours most affectionately,
S. Adams

Early in August 1775, Samuel Adams and the other delegates from Massachusetts hurried home to their families. Congress had adjourned from August 1 to September 5, and when Adams arrived from Philadelphia, he found the General Assembly of the Territory of Massachusetts Bay in session and himself entitled to sit as one of the eighteen councilors.

Elizabeth Adams, who had been forced to leave Boston, was living with her daughter at the home of her aged father in Cambridge, and Samuel Adams, Jr. held an appointment as surgeon in Washington's army.

Friends were looking after all of them. Mr. Adams's visit with his family was a short one, and on September 12, he started on his return to Philadelphia, on a horse loaned him by John Adams.

The coming years of Elizabeth's life brought more of peace and comfort than during the Revolution or the years leading up to it. After the British evacuated Boston in March 1776, she and her family returned to the city to live. Sometimes they were "low in cash," as she naively put it, but with her fine sewing and Hannah's "exquisite embroidery," they managed to live in comfort.

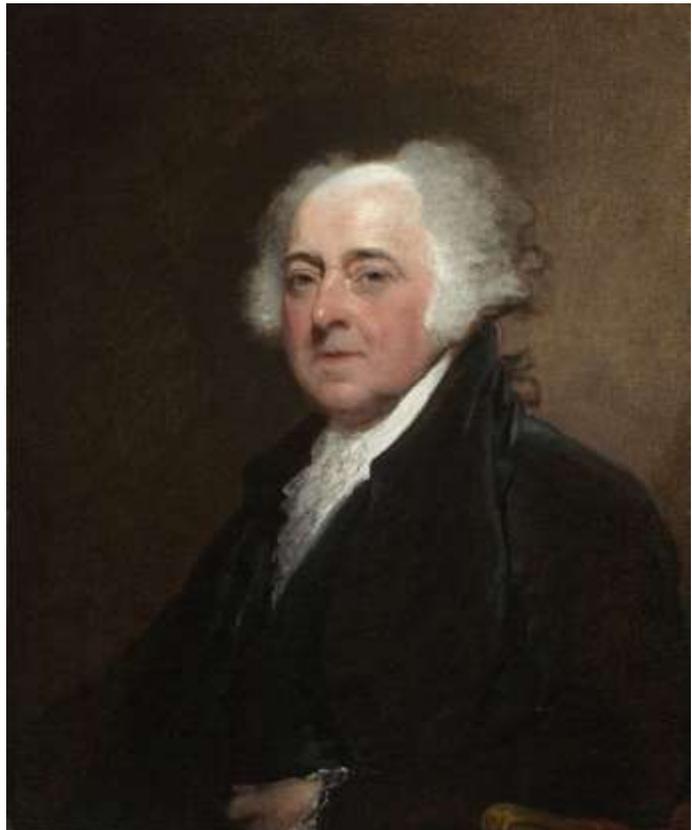
Samuel Adams died at the age of 81 on October 2, 1803, and was interred at the Granary Burying Ground in Boston. The city's Republican newspaper, the Independent Chronicle, eulogized him as the Father of the American Revolution. Elizabeth Wells Adams died in 1808.

John Adams

Adams was born in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1735 (he was 13 years younger than Samuel Adams). He was the eldest of the three sons of Deacon John Adams and Susanna Boylston of Braintree, Massachusetts.

His father was a farmer and shoemaker; the Adams family could trace its lineage back to the first generation of Puritan settlers in New England. A local selectman and a leader in the community, Deacon Adams encouraged his eldest son to aspire toward a career in the ministry.

In keeping with that goal, Adams graduated from Harvard College in 1755. For the next three years, he taught grammar school in Worcester, Massachusetts, while contemplating his future. He eventually chose law rather than the ministry and in 1758 moved back to Braintree, then soon began practicing law in nearby Boston.



Then Adams's legal career was on the rise, and he had become a visible member of the resistance movement that questioned Parliament's right to tax the American colonies.

In 1765 Adams wrote "A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law," which justified opposition to the recently enacted Stamp Act - an effort to raise revenue by requiring all publications and legal documents to bear a stamp - by arguing that Parliament's intrusions into colonial affairs exposed the inherently coercive and corrupt character of English politics.

Intensely combative, full of private doubts about his own capacities but never about his cause, Adams became a leading figure in the opposition to the Townshend Acts (1767), which imposed duties on imported commodities (i.e., glass, lead, paper, paint, and tea).

He early became identified with the patriot cause; a delegate to the First and Second Continental Congresses, he led in the movement for independence.

Learned and thoughtful, John Adams was more remarkable as a political philosopher than as a politician,

People and nations are forged in the fires of adversity.

Despite his hostility toward the British government, in 1770 Adams agreed to defend the British soldiers who had fired on a Boston crowd in what became known as the Boston Massacre.

His insistence on upholding the legal rights of the soldiers, who in fact had been provoked, made him temporarily unpopular but also marked him as one of the most principled radicals in the burgeoning movement for American independence. He had a penchant for doing the right thing.

In the summer of 1774, Adams was elected to the Massachusetts delegation that joined the representatives from 12 of 13 colonies in Philadelphia at the First Continental Congress.

He and his cousin, Samuel Adams, quickly became the leaders of the radical faction, which rejected the prospects for reconciliation with Britain.

By the time the Second Continental Congress convened in 1775, Adams had gained the reputation as “the Atlas of independence.” On March 31, 1776, Abigail reminds John to “Remember the Ladies.” She wrote,

I long to hear that you have declared an independency - and by the way 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 powers 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 Ladies we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation.

That your Sex are Naturally Tyrannical is a Truth so thoroughly established as to admit of no dispute,

but such of you as wish to be happy willingly give up the harsh title of Master for the more tender and endearing one of Friend.

Why then, not put it out of the power of the vicious and the Lawless to use us with cruelty and indignity with impunity.

Men of Sense in all Ages abhor those customs which treat us only as the vassals of your Sex. Regard us then as Beings placed by providence under your protection and in imitation of the Suprem Being make use of that power only for our happiness.

Over the course of the Congress, he made several major contributions to the patriot cause destined to ensure his place in American history.

First, he nominated George Washington to serve as commander of the fledging Continental Army.

Second, he selected Jefferson to draft the Declaration of Independence. (Both decisions were designed to ensure Virginia's support for the revolution.)

Third, he dominated the debate in the Congress on July 2 - 4, 1776, defending Jefferson's draft of the declaration and demanding unanimous support for a decisive break with Great Britain.

He drafted the Plan of Treaties in July 1776, a document that provided the framework for a treaty with France and that almost inadvertently identified the strategic priorities that would shape American foreign policy over the next century.

He was the unanimous choice to head the Board of War and Ordnance and was thereby made in effect a one-man war department responsible for raising and equipping the American army and creating from scratch an American navy.

As the prospects for a crucial wartime alliance with France improved late in 1777, he was chosen to join Benjamin Franklin in Paris to conduct the negotiations. In February 1778 he sailed for Europe, accompanied by 10-year-old John Quincy.

During the Revolutionary War he served in France and Holland in diplomatic roles, and helped negotiate the treaty of peace. From 1785 to 1788 he was minister to the Court of St. James.

Soon after his return to the United States, Adams found himself on the ballot in the presidential election of 1789.

Washington was the unanimous selection of all electors, while Adams finished second, signaling that his standing as a leading member of the revolutionary generation was superseded only by that of Washington himself. Under the electoral rules established in the recent ratified Constitution, Adams was duly elected America's first vice president.

Adams' two terms as Vice President, under President George Washington, were frustrating experiences for a man of his vigor, intellect, and vanity. He complained 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.

When Adams became President, the war between the French and British was causing great difficulties for the United States on the high seas and intense partisanship among contending factions within the Nation.

His administration focused on France, where the Directory, the ruling group, had refused to receive the American envoy and had suspended commercial relations.

Adams sent three commissioners to France, but in the spring of 1798 word arrived that the French Foreign Minister Talleyrand and the Directory had refused to negotiate with them unless they would first pay a

substantial bribe. Adams reported the insult to Congress, and the Senate printed the correspondence, in which the Frenchmen were referred to only as “X, Y, and Z.”

The Nation broke out into what Jefferson called “the X. Y. Z. fever,” increased in intensity by Adams’s encouragements. The populace cheered itself hoarse wherever the President appeared. Never had the Federalists been so popular.

Congress appropriated money to complete three new frigates and to build additional ships, and authorized the raising of a provisional army. It also passed the Alien and Sedition Acts, intended to frighten foreign agents out of the country and to stifle the attacks of Republican editors.

President Adams did not call for a declaration of war, but hostilities began at sea. At first, American shipping was almost defenseless against French privateers, but by 1800 armed merchantmen and U.S. warships were clearing the sea-lanes.

Despite several brilliant naval victories, war fever subsided. Word came to Adams that France also had no stomach for war and would receive an envoy with respect. Long negotiations ended the quasi war.

Sending a peace mission to France brought the full fury of the Hamiltonians against Adams. In the campaign of 1800 the Republicans were united and effective, the Federalists badly divided. Nevertheless, Adams polled only a few less electoral votes than Jefferson, who became President.

On November 1, 1800, just before the election, Adams arrived in the new Capital City to take up his residence in the White House. On his second evening in its damp, unfinished rooms, he wrote his wife, “Before I end my letter, I pray Heaven to bestow the best of Blessings on this House and all that shall hereafter inhabit it. May none but honest and wise Men ever rule under this roof.”

Adams retired to his farm in Quincy. Here he wrote his elaborate letters to Thomas Jefferson. Here on July 4, 1826 (the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence), he whispered his last words: “Thomas Jefferson survives.” But Jefferson had died at Monticello a few hours earlier. (White House)

Abigail Smith Adams

Inheriting New England’s strongest traditions, Abigail Smith was born in 1744 at Weymouth, Massachusetts. On her mother’s side she was descended from the Quincys, a family of great prestige in the colony; her father and other forebearers were Congregational ministers, leaders in a society that held its clergy in high esteem.

Like other women of the time, Abigail lacked formal education; but her curiosity spurred her keen intelligence, and she read avidly the books at hand. Reading created a bond between her and young John Adams, Harvard graduate launched on a career in law, and they were married in 1764. It was a marriage of the mind and of the heart, enduring for more than half a century, enriched by time.



The young couple lived on John's small farm at Braintree or in Boston as his practice expanded. In ten years she bore three sons and two daughters; she looked after family and home when he went traveling as circuit judge. "Alas!" she wrote in December 1773, "How many snow banks divide thee and me..."

Long separations kept Abigail from her husband while he served the country they loved, as delegate to the Continental Congress, envoy abroad, elected officer under the Constitution. A political influencer, she is remembered for the many letters of advice she exchanged with her husband during the Continental Congresses.

Her letters - pungent, witty, and vivid, spelled just as she spoke - detail her life in times of revolution. They tell the story of the woman who stayed at home to struggle with wartime shortages and inflation; to run the farm with a minimum of help; to teach four children when formal education was interrupted

Most of all, they tell of her loneliness without her "dearest Friend." Typical of their letter exchanges was Abigail's lament regarding John's prolonged absence in her letter to him of November 27, 1775:

Colonel Warren returned last week to Plymouth, so that I shall not hear anything from you until he goes back again, which will not be till the last of this month. He damped my spirits greatly by telling me that the court had prolonged your stay another month.

I was pleasing myself with the thought that you would soon be upon your return. It is in vain to repine. I hope the public will reap what I sacrifice.

In 1784, she joined him at his diplomatic post in Paris, and observed with interest the manners of the French. After 1785, she filled the difficult role of wife of the first United States Minister to Great Britain, and did so with dignity and tact.

They returned happily in 1788 to Massachusetts and the handsome house they had just acquired in Braintree, later called Quincy, home for the rest of their lives.

Abigail Adams was the first woman to serve as Second Lady of United States and the second woman to serve as First Lady. She was also the mother of the sixth President, John Quincy Adams.

As wife of the first Vice President, Abigail became a good friend to Mrs. Washington and a valued help in official entertaining, drawing on her experience of courts and society abroad.

After 1791, however, poor health forced her to spend as much time as possible in Quincy. Illness or trouble found her resolute; as she once declared, she would "not forget the blessings which sweeten life."

When John Adams was elected President, she continued a formal pattern of entertaining - even in the primitive conditions she found at the new capital in November 1800. The city was wilderness, the President's House far from completion. Her private complaints to her family provide blunt accounts of both, but for her three months in Washington she duly held her dinners and receptions.

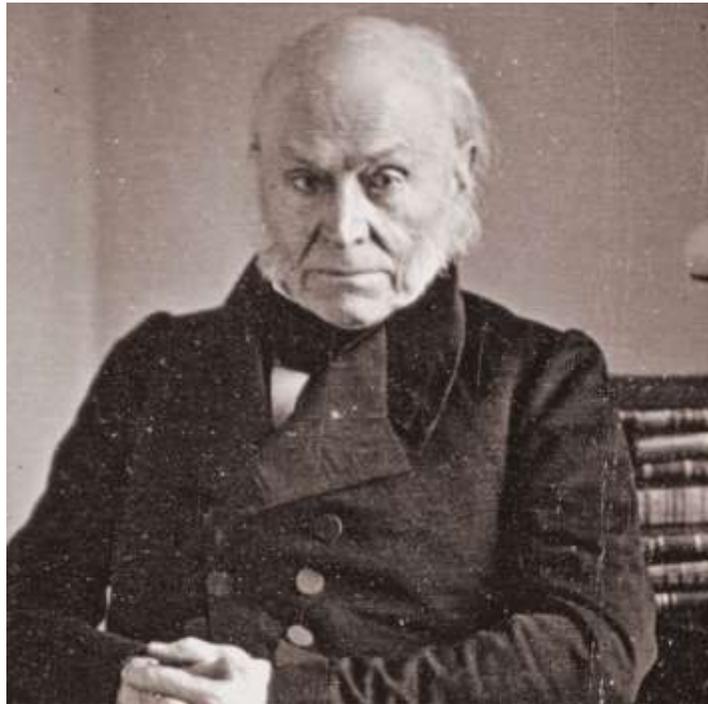
Abigail died in 1818, and is buried beside her husband in United First Parish Church. She left her country a most remarkable record as patriot and First Lady, wife of one President and mother of another. (White House)

John Quincy Adams

John Quincy Adams (eldest son of President John and Abigail Adams) entered the world (July 11, 1767, Braintree [now Quincy], Massachusetts) at the same time that his maternal great-grandfather, John Quincy, for many years a prominent member of the Massachusetts legislature, was leaving it - hence his name.

He grew up as a child of the American Revolution - he watched the Battle of Bunker Hill from Penn's Hill and heard the cannons roar across the Back Bay in Boston.

His patriot father, John Adams, at that time a delegate to the Continental Congress, and his patriot mother, Abigail Smith Adams, had a strong molding influence on his education.



In 1778 and again in 1780 the boy accompanied his father to Europe. He studied at a private school in Paris in 1778–79 and at the University of Leiden, Netherlands, in 1780. Thus, at an early age he acquired an excellent knowledge of the French language and a smattering of Dutch.

In 1781, at age 14, Adams accompanied Francis Dana, United States envoy to Russia, as his private secretary and interpreter of French. Dana, after lingering for more than a year in St. Petersburg, was not received by the Russian government, so in 1782 Adams, returning by way of Scandinavia, Hanover, and the Netherlands, joined his father in Paris.

There he acted, in an informal way, as an additional secretary to the American commissioners in the negotiation of the Peace of Paris that concluded the American Revolution.

Instead of remaining in London with his father, who had been appointed United States minister to the Court of St. James, he chose to return to Massachusetts, where he attended Harvard College, graduating in 1787. In 1790 he was admitted to the bar association in Boston.

While struggling to establish a practice, he wrote a series of articles for the newspapers in which he controverted some of the doctrines in Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* (1791). In another later series he ably supported the neutrality policy of George Washington's administration as it faced the war that broke out between France and England in 1793. These articles were brought to President Washington's attention and resulted in Adams's appointment as U.S. minister to the Netherlands in May 1794.

The Hague was then the best diplomatic listening post in Europe for the War of the First Coalition against Revolutionary France. Young Adams's official dispatches to the secretary of state and his informal letters to his father, who was then the vice president, kept the government well informed of the diplomatic activities and wars of the distressed Continent and the danger of becoming involved in it.

During the absence of Thomas Pinckney, the regular United States minister to Great Britain, Adams transacted public business in London with the British Foreign Office relating to the exchange of ratifications of the Jay Treaty of 1794 between the United States and Great Britain.

In 1796 Washington, who came to regard young Adams as the ablest officer in the foreign service, appointed him minister to Portugal, but before his departure his father became president and changed the young diplomat's destination to Prussia.

While in Berlin, Adams negotiated (1799) a treaty of amity and commerce with Prussia. Recalled from Berlin by President Adams after the election of Thomas Jefferson to the presidency in 1800, the younger Adams reached Boston in 1801 and the next year was elected to the Massachusetts Senate. In 1803 the Massachusetts legislature elected him a member of the Senate of the United States.

Adams arrived in Washington too late to vote for ratification of the treaty for the purchase of Louisiana, which had been opposed by the other Federalist senators, but he voted for the appropriations to carry it into effect and announced that he would have voted for the purchase treaty itself.

All through his life, ever aspiring to higher public service, he considered himself a "man of my whole country."

In December 1807 he supported President Jefferson's suggestion of an embargo to essentially stop all commerce with other nations (an attempt to gain British recognition of American rights) and vigorously urged instant action, saying:

The President has recommended the measure on his high responsibility. I would not consider, I would not deliberate; I would act!

Within five hours the Senate had passed the embargo bill and had sent it to the House of Representatives. Support of this measure, hated by the Federalists and unpopular in New England because it stifled the region's economy, cost Adams his seat in the Senate. His successor was chosen on June 3, 1808, several months before the usual time of electing a senator for the next term, and five days later Adams resigned.

In the same year he attended the Republican congressional caucus, which nominated James Madison for the presidency, and thus he allied himself with that party. From 1806 to 1809 Adams was Boylston professor of rhetoric and oratory at Harvard College.

In 1809 President Madison sent Adams to Russia to represent the United States at the court of Tsar Alexander I. From this vantage point he watched and reported Napoleon's invasion of Russia and the final disastrous retreat and dissolution of France's Grand Army.

On the outbreak of the war between the United States and England in 1812, he was still in St. Petersburg. That September the Russian government suggested that the tsar was willing to act as mediator between the two belligerents. Madison precipitately accepted this proposition and sent Albert Gallatin and James Bayard to act as commissioners with Adams, but England would have nothing to do with it.

In August 1814, however, these men, with Henry Clay and Jonathan Russell, began negotiations with English commissioners that resulted in the signing of the Treaty of Ghent on December 24 of that year.

Adams then visited Paris, where he witnessed the return of Napoleon from Elba, and next went to London, where, with Clay and Gallatin, he negotiated (1815) a "Convention to Regulate Commerce and Navigation." Soon afterward he became U.S. minister to Great Britain, as his father had been before him, and as his son, Charles Francis Adams, was to be after him.

He returned to the United States in the summer of 1817 to become Secretary of State in the cabinet of President James Monroe.

Adams played the leading part in the acquisition of Florida and was also responsible for conclusion of the treaty of 1818 with Great Britain, laying down the northern boundary of the United States from the Lake of the Woods (at the border of what is now Minnesota and Canada) to the Rocky Mountains along the line of latitude 49° N.

Years later, as a member of the House of Representatives, he supported latitude 49° N as the boundary of Oregon from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean: "I want that country for our Western pioneers." In fact, President James K. Polk's Oregon treaty of 1846 drew that boundary along the line of 49°.

The Monroe Doctrine rightly bears the name of the president who in 1823 assumed the responsibility for its promulgation, but its formulation was the work of John Quincy Adams more than of any other single man.

As President Monroe's second term drew to a close in 1824, three in his cabinet - Secretary of State John Quincy Adams, Secretary of War John C. Calhoun, and Secretary of the Treasury William H. Crawford - aspired to succeed him. Adams was elected. In 1828 Jackson was elected president over Adams.

Adams had retired to private life in 1829 in the Massachusetts town of Quincy, but only for a brief period; in 1830, supported largely by members of the Anti-Masonic movement (a political force formed initially in opposition to Freemasonry), he was elected a member of the national House of Representatives.

When it was suggested to him that his acceptance of this position would degrade a former president, Adams replied that no person could be degraded by serving the people as a representative in Congress or a selectman of his town. He served in the House of Representatives from 1831 until his death.

Perhaps the most dramatic event in Adams's life was its end.

On February 21, 1848, in the act of protesting an honorary grant of swords by Congress to the generals who had won what Adams considered a "most unrighteous war" with Mexico, he suffered a cerebral stroke, fell unconscious to the floor of the House, and died two days later in the Capitol building.

His funerals in Washington and in his native Massachusetts assumed the character of a nationwide pageant of mourning.

Senator Thomas Hart Benton, the main eulogist at the service in the Capitol, asked:

"Where would death have found him except at the place of duty?"

Louisa Catherine Johnson Adams

John Quincy Adams was married in London in 1797, to Louisa Catherine Johnson (Louisa Adams), daughter of the United States consul Joshua Johnson, a Marylander by birth, and his wife, Katherine Nuth, an Englishwoman.

Adams had first met her when he was 12 years old and his father was minister to France. Fragile in health, she suffered from migraine headaches and fainting spells. Yet she proved to be a gracious hostess who played the harp and was learned in Greek, French, and English literature. Accompanying her husband on his various missions in Europe, she came to be regarded as one of the most-traveled women of her time.

Johnson was not, however, Adams's first love. When he was 14 years old, he had had a "crush" on an actress he saw perform in France, and for years afterward, he confessed, she was in his dreams.



At age 22 he fell deeply in love with one Mary Frazier but was dissuaded from marrying her by his mother, who insisted that he was not able to support a wife. Ultimately, Adams could see that, in marrying a rich heiress like Louisa Johnson, he might be able to enjoy the leisure to pursue a career as a writer, but her family suffered business reverses and declared bankruptcy only a few weeks after the wedding.

The union had many stormy moments. Adams was cold and often depressed, and he admitted that his political adversaries regarded him as a "gloomy misanthropist" and "unsocial savage." His wife is said to have regretted her marriage into the Adams family.

The loss of two sons in adulthood, and a daughter in infancy, may have heightened the strains between husband and wife. The eldest son, George Washington Adams, was a gambler, womanizer, and alcoholic whose death by drowning may have been suicide.

The second son, John Adams II, succumbed to alcohol. He remains the only son of a president who was married in the White House. On that occasion, the president unbent and danced the Virginia reel.

A third son, Charles Francis Adams, brought honor to the family name once again, being elected to the House of Representatives and serving as United States minister to England during the American Civil War.

Information here is primarily from Britannica; White House; Karen Perkins; History of American Women

In an effort to provide a brief, informal background summary of various people, places and events related to the American Revolution, I made this informal compilation from a variety of sources. This is not intended to be a technical reference document, nor an exhaustive review of the subject. Rather, it is an assemblage of information and images from various sources on basic background information. For ease in informal reading, in many cases, specific quotations and citations and attributions are often not included – however, sources are noted in the summary. The images and text are from various sources and are presented for personal, noncommercial and/or educational purposes. Thanks, Peter T. Young