



Abigail ADAMS

(1744 – 1818)

Abigail Adams was the wife of John Adams, the second President of the United States.

She was also the mother of the sixth President, John Quincy Adams.

Abigail was known as “Mrs President” because her husband often asked for her advice when he was in office. This helped the First Ladies who came after her to be more involved in politics.

Abigail and her husband wrote over 1000 letters to each other. These letters are important eyewitness accounts of what life was like during the American Revolution.

Abigail's Childhood

Abigail was born on November 11, 1744 in Weymouth, Massachusetts. She had an older brother and two younger sisters.

Her father was William Smith, a church minister. He had a large library that many clergymen and students would visit. This made Abigail appreciate a good education.

But Abigail didn't go to school, like many girls at the time. Her mother, Elizabeth Smith, taught her to read and write.

Abigail was very bright. She knew a great deal about poetry, philosophy and politics.

Marriage

Abigail and John Adams were third cousins and knew of each other since childhood. John fell in love with Abigail when she was 17. He was impressed by her beauty and her brains.

Two years later they were married. They soon moved to Boston, where John made his name as a lawyer. They began a family and had three sons and two daughters.

The American Revolution

Shortly after they married, the American Revolution began to take shape. Both Abigail and John wanted America to be free from British rule.



The Abigail Adams coin was released on June 19, 2007

In 1774, John was sent to Philadelphia to serve in the first congress. Abigail stayed at home to raise the children.

Abigail shared control of the family's money and property. She bought more land for their farm. This amount of control was rare for a woman at the time.

The couple had never been apart before and began writing letters to each other. John would ask Abigail for advice on his work in congress. Abigail would report back with news on the American Revolution and how the people of Boston were reacting to policies.

In 1776, Congress began debating the Declaration of Independence. This was an important decision if the colonies were to become a nation in their own right.

Abigail urged her husband to make sure that any new laws gave women equal rights to men. She famously told him to "Remember the ladies."

John wasn't persuaded, but her letters stand out today as some of the earliest known writings on women's rights.

War and Peace

When the Revolutionary War began, Abigail wasn't far from battle. Soldiers hid in her home and trained in her yard.

The war ended in 1783 after many battles, and America became a free nation. John was in Europe at the time working as a diplomat.

Abigail continued to keep him informed of news back home, before joining him in 1783. She explored France and even met the King of England.

They returned to America in 1788. John was elected Vice-President under George Washington.

Abigail served her duties as Second Lady, but worried about the farm back home. She was a strong woman, but didn't enjoy being in the public eye.

First Lady

In 1796, John became President. Abigail thought her main duties were to host visitors and help the needy. Even then, she still influenced John's decision-making!

She spoke her mind on many subjects, but worried this would get her into trouble. She opposed slavery and didn't like having slaves in the Presidential home. She championed equal education for girls.

In 1800, Abigail became the first First Lady to live in the White House. She lived there for four months, before Thomas Jefferson was elected President.



Abigail Adams by Gilbert Stuart

Later that year, her son died of alcoholism. Charles Adams was just 30 years old.

Retirement

After John lost the election, the couple retired to their farm. They lived a quiet life for many years. Abigail was happy to be out of the public eye.

After suffering a stroke, Abigail died on October 28, 1818. Seven years later, her son became president.

Abigail Adams is remembered today as a champion of equality, for women and African-Americans. In modern America, the First Lady can give her husband political advice without fear of getting into trouble. This is all thanks to Abigail Adams.

A promotional graphic for 'Great Women Biographies for kids'. On the left is a line drawing of a girl with long hair, wearing a pirate captain's hat with a skull and crossbones, a striped shirt, and a long coat, holding a cutlass. To the right of the illustration, the text reads: 'Want more Great Women Biographies for kids?' followed by 'go to www.lottie.com/blogs/great-women-and-girls'. The entire graphic is enclosed in a dashed rectangular border.

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