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**Live from American History: Abigail Adams** (31 March - 5 April 1776): LETTER TO JOHN ADAMS, ([HTTPS://WWW.MASSHIST.ORG/DIGITALADAMS/ARCHIVE/DOC?ID=L17760331AA](https://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/archive/doc?id=L17760331AA)): "Braintree March 31, 1776..."

...I wish you would ever write me a Letter half as long as I write you; and tell me if you may where your Fleet are gone? What sort of Defence Virginia can make against our common Enemy? Whether it is so situated as to make an able Defence? Are not the Gentry Lords and the common people vassals, are they not like the uncivilized Natives Brittain represents us to be? I hope their Riffel Men who have shewen themselves very savage and even Blood thirsty; are not a specimen of the Generality of the people.

I [illegible] am willing to allow the Colony great merrit for having produced a Washington but they have been shamefully duped by a Dunmore.

I have sometimes been ready to think that the passion for Liberty cannot be Eaquelly Strong in the Breasts of those who have been accustomed to deprive their fellow Creatures of theirs. Of this I am certain that it is not founded upon that generous and christian principal of doing to others as we would that others should do unto us.

Do not you want to see Boston; I am fearfull of the small pox, or I should have been in before this time. I got Mr. Crane to go to our House and see what state it was in. I find it has been occupied by one of the Doctors of a Regiment, very dirty, but no other damage has been done to it. The few things which were left in it are all gone. Cranch has the key which he never deliverd up. I have wrote to him for it and am determined to get it cleand as soon as possible and shut it up. I look upon it a new acquisition of property, a property which one month ago I did not value at a single Shilling, and could with pleasure have seen it in flames.



The Town in General is left in a better state than we expected, more owing to a precipitate flight than any. Regard to the inhabitants, though some individuals discovered a sense of honour and justice and have left the rent of the Houses in which they were, for the owners and the furniture unhurt, or if damaged sufficient to make it good.

Others have committed abominable Ravages. The Mansion House of your President is safe and the furniture unhurt whilst both the House and Furniture of the Solicitor General have fallen a prey to their own merciless party. Surely the very Fiends feel a Reverential awe for Virtue and patriotism, whilst they Detest the paricide and traitor.

I feel very differently at the approach of spring to what I did a month ago. We knew not then whether we could plant or sow with safety, whether when we had toiled we could reap the fruits of our own industry, whether we could rest in our own Cottages, or whether we should not be driven from the sea coasts to seek shelter in the wilderness, but now we feel as if we might sit under our own vine and eat the good of the land.

taught to use us with cruelty & indignity <sup>with impunity</sup> than to lose in all  
 ages those customs which treat us only as the subjects of your  
 Regard as true as things placed by Providence under your protection  
 & in imitation of the Japanese bring make use of that power  
 only for our happiness -

April 5<sup>th</sup> 1771

Not having an opportunity of sending  
 this I shall add a few lines more; I sit not with a heart so gay  
 I have been attending the sick chamber of our neighbour Goff which  
 affliction I most sensibly feel but cannot describe. Stages of his  
 body continue in one week longer than last did on Sunday &  
 1<sup>st</sup> the gouty on Tues<sup>day</sup> - with the Cancer now a terrible  
 tumor so much like the fatal distemper that it differs but little  
 from it - belly cramp has been very bad, but upon the recovery  
 today such they do not expect will live out the day - Many grown  
 people are now sick with it, this that is - it appears much in other  
 towns the things too are very urgent, there is now content with  
 it - our own little flock are not well - my heart trembles with  
 anxiety for them, God protect them, I want to hear much  
 often from you should so much & was the last time date of any  
 that I have yet tried - you inquire of whether I am making  
 list paper, I have not yet attempted it, but after long making  
 felices I shall make the experiment, as far as much as I can  
 do to manufacture cloathing for my family <sup>which</sup> who would like to  
 make - I know of but one person this part of the town who  
 was since any, that it is our father's shop as he had care who has  
 got very near an hundred weight which has been found to be  
 very good & have heard of some others in the other parishes  
 for this of every month has been applied to, to go to Andover  
 to the mills which are now at work & has gone & have  
 lately seen a small manufactory describing the proportions of the  
 various sorts of powder, ~~like~~ <sup>like</sup> cannon small arms & pistols  
~~like~~ - if it would be of any service your way I will get it  
 perfected by send it to you - Every one of your friends send  
 their regards, are all the little ones - your brother's youngest child  
 has been with convulsions - adieu I need not say how much  
 I am your ever faithful friend -

Tho we felicitate ourselves, we sympathize with those who are trembling least the Lot of Boston should be theirs. But they cannot be in similar circumstances unless pusillanimity and cowardise should take



possession of them. They have time and warning given them to see the Evil and shun it. -- 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 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 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 Supream Being make use of that power only for our happiness.

**April 5:** Not having an opportunity of sending this I shall add a few lines more; tho not with a heart so gay. I have been attending the sick chamber of our Neighbour Trot whose affliction I most sensibly feel but cannot discribe, striped of two lovely children in one week. Gorge the Eldest died on wedensday and Billy the youngest on fryday, with the Canker fever, a terrible disorder so much like the throat distemper, that it differs but little from it. Betsy Cranch has been very bad, but upon the recovery. Becky Peck they do not expect will live out the day. Many grown persons are now sick with it, in this street 5. It rages much in other Towns. The Mumps too are very frequent. Isaac is now confined with it. Our own little flock are yet well. My Heart trembles with anxiety for them. God preserve them.

I want to hear much oftener from you than I do. March 8 [John to Abigail, 08 March 1776] was the last date of any that I have yet had. -- You inquire of whether I am making Salt peter. I have not yet attempted it, but after Soap making believe I shall make the experiment. I find as much as I can do to manufacture cloathing for my family whowhich

would else be Naked. I know of but one person in this part of the Town who has made any, that is Mr. Tertias Bass as he is calld who has got very near an hundred weight which has been found to be very good. I have heard of some others in the other parishes. Mr. Reed of Weymouth has been applied to, to go to Andover to the mills which are now at work, and has gone. I have lately seen a small Manuscrip describing the proportions for the various sorts of powder, such as fit for cannon, small arms and pistols [illegible]. If it would be of any Service your way I will get it transcribed and send it to you. -- Every one of your Friends send their Regards, and all the little ones. Your Brothers youngest child lies bad with convulsion fitts. Adieu.

I need not say how much I am Your ever faithfull Friend.

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### **Abigail Smith Adams** 1744-1818:

Married 1764 (at 20: early—but not so much for America) **John Adams** 1735-1826...

- Abigail ("Nabby") 1765–1813)
- John Quincy Adams 1767–1848
- Grace Susanna ("Suky") 1768–70
- Charles 1770–1800
- Thomas Boylston Adams 1772–1832
- Elizabeth (stillborn) 1777

No formal schooling...

Not present at husband's presidential inauguration: caring for her dying mother...

At 74: "Do not grieve, my friend, my dearest friend. I am ready to go. And John, it will not be long."

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**John Adams** (14 Apr 1776): To Abigail Adams: "As to your extraordinary code of laws, I cannot but laugh..."

...We have been told that our struggle has loosened the bonds of government everywhere; that children and apprentices were disobedient; that schools and colleges were grown turbulent; that Indians slighted their guardians, and negroes grew insolent to their masters.

But your letter was the first intimation that another tribe, more numerous and powerful than all the rest, were grown discontented.

This is rather too coarse a compliment, but you are so saucy, I won't blot it out.



Depend upon it, we know better than to repeal our masculine systems. Although they are in full force, you know they are little more than theory. We dare not exert our power in its full latitude. We are obliged to go fair and softly, and, in practice, you know we are the subjects.

We have only the name of masters, and rather than give up this, which would completely subject us to the despotism of the petticoat, I hope General Washington and all our brave heroes would fight.

## **Memo** Queens of England Deaths in Childbed:

Posted on February 26, 2018 at 08:12 in #acrossthewidemissouri (<https://www.bradford-delong.com/across-the-wide-missouri/>), #economichistory ([https://www.bradford-delong.com/economic\\_history/](https://www.bradford-delong.com/economic_history/)), #economics (<https://www.bradford-delong.com/economics/>), #equitablegrowth (<https://www.bradford-delong.com/equitable-growth/>), Economics: Inequality (<https://www.bradford-delong.com/economics-inequality/>), History (<https://www.bradford-delong.com/history/>) | Permalink (<https://www.bradford-delong.com/2018/02/live-from-american-history-abigail-adams-31-march-5-april-1776-letter-to-john-adams-httpswwwmasshistorg.html>) | Comments (2) (<https://www.bradford-delong.com/2018/02/live-from-american-history-abigail-adams-31-march-5-april-1776-letter-to-john-adams-httpswwwmasshistorg.html#comments>)

# Comments

Redwood Rhiadra said...

Fake letters. Not one mention of saltpeter or pins.... (All my revolutionary history was learned from 1776, of course.)

Reply February 26, 2018 at 16:29 (<https://www.bradford-delong.com/2018/02/live-from-american-history-abigail-adams-31-march-5-april-1776-letter-to-john-adams-httpswwwmasshistorg.html#comment-6a00e551f08003883401b8d2ddddd29970c>)

Dave W. said...

Look again - it's near the end of her letter:

"You inquire of whether I am making Salt peter. I have not yet attempted it, but after Soap making believe I shall make the experiment."

(Nothing about pins in this one, though.)

Reply February 26, 2018 at 17:03 (<https://www.bradford-delong.com/2018/02/live-from-american-history-abigail-adams-31-march-5-april-1776-letter-to-john-adams-httpswwwmasshistorg.html#comment-6a00e551f08003883401bb09f6dcfa970d>)

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- Brad DeLong's Short Biography (<https://www.bradford-delong.com/short-biography.html>)

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