



John Adams



Abigail Adams

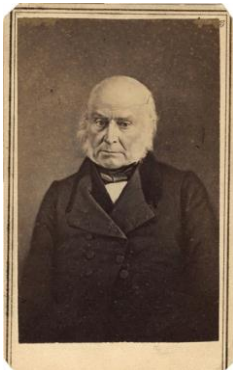


Abigail Adams
Smith

Adams Family

Foreign Policy:

Letters and Diaries from Europe



John Quincy
Adams



Charles Francis Adams



Henry Brooks Adams

Jason L. S. Raia

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Adams Teacher Fellowship at the Massachusetts Historical
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✎ John Adams portrait, pastel by Benjamin Blyth, circa 1766.

✎ Abigail Adams portrait, pastel by Benjamin Blyth, circa 1766.

✎ Abigail Adams Smith, miniature portrait on porcelain tile after the portrait by John
Singleton Copley, circa 1795.

✎ John Quincy Adams, carte de visite of daguerrotype by Brady's National Photographic
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✎ Charles Francis Adams, carte de visite by John & Chas. Watkins, 1862. From the
Adams family papers III.

✎ Henry Brooks Adams, photograph by Marian Hooper Adams, circa 1883. From the
Marian Hooper Adams photographs.

❧Preface❧

Adams Family Foreign Policy was completed during the summer of 2006 as part of my Adams Teacher Fellowship at the Massachusetts Historical Society (MHS). Too many people deserve to be thanked, but I cannot fail to mention the following members of the MHS staff who made this project possible: Stephen T. Riley Librarian Peter Drummey, Education Coordinator Kathleen Barker, and Reference Librarian Kimberly Nusco. The editing team of the Adams Family Papers was a source of much assistance, particularly Managing Editor Margaret A. Hogan, Editor Gregg L. Lint, and Assistant Editor Hobson Woodward. Finally, my sincerest gratitude is extended to all those in the MHS reading room who make research such a joy.

The intention of this project is to provide insight into the Adams family members and their combined efforts in the realm of American foreign policy between 1781 and 1863. This collection of primary source materials, culled from the *Adams Family Papers*, is divided into four lessons covering four major periods and events of early American history: John Adams in the Netherlands during the American Revolution; Abigail Adams and her daughter Abigail Adams 2nd in London during the Confederation period; John Quincy Adams in Ghent negotiating the end of the War of 1812; and Charles Francis Adams and his son Henry in London during the American Civil War.

Intended as a primary source book for honors or Advanced Placement-level high school students, *Adams Family Foreign Policy* excerpts Adams family letters and diaries in order to examine more deeply events of American History, which often do not garner much attention. Review and critical-thinking questions are provided to encourage students to contemplate the implications of the words and decisions of the Adamses.

Students are encouraged to write an online journal in the form of a weblog. To facilitate students' online journaling, "Blog Prompts" are periodically provided within the *Adams Family Foreign Policy* lesson plans. In their blogs, students should not focus on direct analysis or exegesis of the documents; rather, they should attempt to bring the Adamses into the present. The students' emotional and intellectual responses to the letters and diaries will help make American History more concrete and fathomable. Also, if students can find contemporary analogies to the events they are reading about, these make for wonderful weblog entries.

Reading these letters and diary entries has been more than just learning the historical background to events of American history. It has been enlightening in both a personal and an intellectual way. May it also be so for you and your students.

Jason L. S. Raia
MHS Adams Teacher Fellow
Summer 2006

∞ Introduction ∞

While studying American History, students often learn about the Virginia dynasty: that succession of early presidents hailing from one of the new nation's most populated states. In terms of duration, the Virginia dynasty pales when compared to America's first political dynasty founded by John and Abigail Adams.

For four generations, the Adamses are at the forefront of events in America, and their decisions, actions, commentary, and influence reach from the eighteenth century down to the twentieth century. Both John and John Quincy were Presidents of the United States of America. John, John Quincy, and Charles Francis served in Congress and represented the United States as ambassadors to the Court of Saint James in London. Later, Henry Adams wrote one of the most influential works of personal and political history in the twentieth century. It is possible to follow American history through its first century and beyond through this one family.

Public service was the hallmark of the Adams dynasty, as well as commitment to democratic principles and moral values. Deeply intellectual, Harvard College was the training ground for all the Adams men (Abigail and her daughter were taught at home as was the custom), and in times of war and strife the pen was truly the mighty weapon wielded by each successive generation of Adamses.

During the American Revolution, John Adams would use his pen to continue the war effort by securing Dutch recognition of the United States and a series of loans to prop up the nascent republic. He negotiated treaties with the Dutch, the English, and Morocco. He served with distinction as one of America's first foreign ambassadors.

Abigail Adams and her daughter—Abigail Adams 2nd—would join John in Europe after the revolution was over. Their long letters home from France and England reveal both a love of home and the same democratic and moral values that permeate the entire dynasty. Their letters are an insight into the less formal but no less rigorous lives of women in the late eighteenth century.

The son of John, John Quincy Adams followed in his father's footsteps. A prolific writer, John Quincy recorded everything. He often rose with the sun to put in two hours of writing before the day began. His diary, begun as a teenager, ultimately reached over 15,000 pages. In 1814, when he was sent to negotiate peace once again with Great Britain, John Quincy recorded not only the formal discussions with British ministers but also the rough and tumble deliberations of the American legation.

Son of John Quincy, Charles Francis Adams was a Congressman and Vice-Presidential candidate for the Free-Soil party before being tapped by Abraham Lincoln to take up the post once held by his forefathers: Minister to the Court of Saint James. From London, Charles Francis struggled to keep Europe out of the war while President Abraham Lincoln and the Union army struggled to bring the Confederacy back into the fold.

Charles Francis inherited diplomatic skills that allowed Lincoln and the Union to succeed without European interference.

A son of Charles Francis, Henry Adams served as his father's private secretary in London. His observations of both the British reaction to the war and his father's reaction to the British offer a perspective on the Civil War rarely witnessed. These skills of observation served him well throughout the next six decades.

No single family has influenced American history as deeply, as positively, or from such lofty heights as the Adams family did. John Adams stepped on the national stage 1770 when he defended the British soldiers accused of murder after the Boston Massacre. John and his progeny remained on that national stage—sometimes at the center and sometimes in the wings, but nevertheless on stage—until 1918. Almost 150 years of influence and action shaped and prepared the United States to become the world power it is today. Imagine how being part of that legacy must have weighed on each succeeding generation.

The Adams Family Papers, which was the ultimate source for all the letters and diary entries contained in this primary source book, is contained on 608 reels of microfilm. It is a massive collection that tells the story of the Adams Family and its achievements. Herein you will witness just four extended moments from over the course of 150 years of Adams Family influence. It is but a glimpse, but a rewarding one nonetheless.

∞ *Adams Foreign Policy Timeline* ∞

1777–1885

Source: Massachusetts Historical Society. <http://www.masshist.org/adams/timeline.cfm> - 1776

1777 *27 November.* John Adams elected by Congress a joint commissioner, with Benjamin Franklin and Arthur Lee, to France.

1778 *14 February–1 April.* John and John Quincy Adams sail on board the frigate *Boston* for France. On 8 April, they arrive at Paris and soon take up residence with Benjamin Franklin at Passy.

8 May. John Adams's first audience with Louis XVI.

1779 *11 February.* John Adams learns that the joint commission is superseded by Benjamin Franklin's appointment as minister to France.

17 June–3 August. John and John Quincy Adams sail from Lorient to Boston on board the French frigate *La Sensible*.

27 September. John Adams appointed to negotiate treaties of peace and commerce with Great Britain.

15 November. John, John Quincy, and Charles Adams sail for France on *La Sensible*.

8 December. A leak forces *La Sensible* to put into El Ferrol, Spain. The Adamses travel across northern Spain to France, arriving in Paris on 9 February 1780.

1780 *20 June.* Congress commissions John Adams to raise a loan in the Netherlands.

July. John Adams writes what becomes known as "Letters from a Distinguished American"; they are published in London in 1782.

27 July–10 August. John, John Quincy, and Charles Adams travel from Paris to Amsterdam.

4–27 October. John Adams writes 26 letters to Hendrik Calkoen in an effort to explain the origins, progress, and nature of the American Revolution to the Dutch people.

29 December. John Adams commissioned by Congress to conclude a commercial treaty with the Netherlands.

1781 *2 May.* John Adams presents a memorial to the States General of the United Provinces calling on it to recognize and conclude a commercial treaty with the United States and then publishes the memorial as a pamphlet in English, French, and Dutch.

15 June. Congress revokes John Adams's commissions to negotiate Anglo-American peace and commercial treaties and creates a joint commission

- consisting of Adams, Benjamin Franklin, John Jay, Henry Laurens, and Thomas Jefferson to negotiate a peace treaty.
- July.** John Adams briefly returns to Paris to discuss the proposed Austro-Russian mediation of the war and rejects American participation unless there is prior recognition of American independence.
- 7 July–27 August.** John Quincy Adams accompanies Francis Dana to St. Petersburg, where he serves as Dana's secretary and interpreter.
- 1782** **19 April.** The States General of the Netherlands recognizes American independence.
- 22 April.** John Adams presents his letter of credence as minister plenipotentiary from the United States to William V, stadholder of the Netherlands.
- 12 May.** John Adams takes up residence in the Hôtel des Etats-Unis at The Hague, the first American legation building in Europe.
- 11 June.** John Adams signs a contract with a syndicate of Amsterdam bankers for a loan of five million guilders.
- 8 October.** John Adams signs a treaty of amity and commerce with the Netherlands.
- 30 October.** John Quincy Adams leaves St. Petersburg for Holland. He travels through Finland to Stockholm, Copenhagen, and Hamburg, and arrives at The Hague on 21 April 1783.
- 30 November.** John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and John Jay sign the preliminary peace treaty between the United States and Great Britain in Paris.
- 1783** **3 September.** John Adams signs the definitive peace treaty between the United States and Great Britain.
- 1784** **9 March.** John Adams concludes a second Dutch loan in Amsterdam to save American credit.
- May–June.** Congress elects John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson commissioners to negotiate treaties of amity and commerce with European and North African nations.
- 20 June.** Abigail Adams and her daughter, Abigail 2d, sail from Boston for England, arriving in London on 21 July.
- 30 July.** John Quincy Adams joins his mother and sister in London. John Adams arrives a week later.
- August–May 1785.** The Adamses reside at Auteuil near Paris.
- 1785** **24 February.** John Adams named the first United States minister to Great Britain.
- 12 May.** John Quincy Adams leaves Paris, returning to Boston on 25 August after spending a month in New York City.
- 26 May.** John, Abigail, and Abigail Adams 2d arrive at London.

- 1 June.* John Adams is presented to George III.
- 23 June.* Abigail and Abigail Adams 2d are presented to King George and Queen Charlotte.
- 2 July.* John, Abigail, and Abigail Adams 2d move into the first American legation in London, a house on Grosvenor Square.
- 5 August.* John Adams signs a treaty of amity and commerce with Prussia.
- 1786** *25 January.* John Adams signs treaty of peace and friendship with Morocco.
- 15 March.* John Quincy Adams enters Harvard College as a junior; graduates in 1787.
- March–April.* Thomas Jefferson visits John Adams in London to negotiate commercial treaties with Tripoli, Portugal, and Great Britain; tours English gardens with Adams.
- 12 June.* Abigail Adams 2d marries William Stephens Smith in London.
- August–September.* John Adams visits the Netherlands with Abigail to exchange ratifications of the treaty with Prussia; sees early triumph of Patriot party.
- 1787** *May–June.* John Adams visits Holland to conclude a third Dutch loan.
- June–July.* In London, the Adamases care for Thomas Jefferson's daughter Mary and her companion Sally Hemmings, who are en route to live with Jefferson in Paris.
- October.* At John Adams's request, Congress recalls him from his diplomatic missions.
- 1788** *20 February.* John Adams has farewell audience with George III.
- February–March.* John Adams makes his last visit to Holland, contracts a fourth loan.
- April–May.* Abigail Adams Smith and William Stephens Smith return to America; settle in New York.
- 1794** *30 May.* President Washington appoints John Quincy Adams resident minister to the Netherlands.
- September–October.* John Quincy Adams sails to England with Thomas Boylston Adams, whom he names his secretary.
- 6 November.* John Quincy Adams presents his credentials at The Hague.
- 1796** *30 May.* President Washington appoints John Quincy Adams minister plenipotentiary to Portugal, but Adams never serves under this appointment.
- December.* John Adams narrowly defeats Thomas Jefferson for the presidency.
- 1797** *4 March.* John Adams inaugurated second president of the United States.

- 1 June.* President John Adams appoints John Quincy Adams minister plenipotentiary to Prussia.
- May–July.* President John Adams appoints first peace mission to France, to resolve the issue of America's rights as a neutral maritime power during the Anglo-French war.
- July.* John Quincy Adams presents his letter of recall to the Dutch government.
- 1798** *March–April.* President John Adams declares a state of quasi-war with France and publishes the XYZ papers showing French attempts to bribe American diplomats.
- 1799** *February.* President John Adams appoints a second peace mission to France.
- 11 July.* John Quincy Adams signs a treaty of amity and commerce with Prussia.
- October.* President John Adams dispatches second peace mission to France.
- 1800** *October.* American diplomats conclude Convention of Mortefontaine with France, ending the quasi-war and the Franco-American alliance of 1778.
- December.* President John Adams defeated for reelection.
- 1807** *18 August.* Charles Francis Adams, son of John Quincy and Louisa Catherine Adams, born in Boston.
- 1809** *27 June.* President Madison appoints John Quincy Adams minister plenipotentiary to Russia.
- 1814** *January.* John Quincy Adams appointed to head commission to negotiate an Anglo-American peace treaty.
- 28 April–24 June.* John Quincy Adams travels alone from St. Petersburg to Ghent to negotiate treaty; meetings with British commissioners begin on 8 August.
- 24 December.* John Quincy Adams signs the Treaty of Ghent with Great Britain, ending the War of 1812.
- 1815** *12 February–23 March.* Louisa Catherine and Charles Francis Adams travel overland from St. Petersburg to join John Quincy Adams in Paris; her recollections of this trip published in *Scribner's Magazine* in 1903.
- 28 February.* John Quincy Adams commissioned envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary to Great Britain.

- 25 May.** John Quincy Adams's entire family reunited in London.
- 3 July.** John Quincy Adams, Henry Clay, and Albert Gallatin sign Commercial Convention that first establishes American diplomatic equality with Great Britain.
- 1817** **5 March.** President Monroe appoints John Quincy Adams secretary of state.
- 14 May.** John Quincy Adams presents recall as minister to Great Britain; travels with family from London to Quincy, arriving in August.
- September.** John Quincy Adams assumes post of secretary of state.
- 1818** **July.** John Quincy Adams opposes censure of Andrew Jackson for invading the Spanish province of Florida without authorization.
- 20 October.** American commissioners in London, under the direction of John Quincy Adams, sign the Convention of 1818 with Britain, clarifying America's northern boundary, fishing rights, and commerce.
- 28 October.** Abigail Adams dies in Quincy.
- 1819** **22 February.** John Quincy Adams signs Transcontinental Treaty with Spain (the Adams-Onís Treaty), by which the United States extends its boundaries (in Oregon) to the Pacific Ocean and acquires the territory of Florida.
- 1822** John Quincy Adams publishes a defense of his diplomacy at Ghent, *The Duplicate Letters, the Fisheries and the Mississippi*, in response to the criticism of fellow negotiator Jonathan Russell.
- 1823** **2 December.** President Monroe announces his famous doctrine, largely the work of John Quincy Adams.
- 1824** **5–17 April.** John Quincy Adams concludes Convention with Russia, establishing 54° 40' as northern limit of the American sphere of influence and insuring the later incorporation of Oregon territory into the U.S.
- November.** John Quincy Adams runs second to Andrew Jackson in the national election for president; no candidate receives a majority vote.
- 1825** **9 February.** John Quincy Adams chosen president by the House of Representatives; inaugurated 4 March as the sixth president of the United States.
- 1826** **4 July.** John Adams dies in Quincy on the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, the same day Thomas Jefferson dies at Monticello.

- Congress opposes President John Quincy Adams's and Secretary of State Henry Clay's energetic Latin American policy.
- 1828** *November*. John Quincy Adams defeated by Andrew Jackson for the presidency.
- 1830** *1 November*. John Quincy Adams elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from Massachusetts' Plymouth district; reelected until his death.
- 1835** *27 May*. Charles Francis Adams 2d, son of Charles Francis Adams, born in Boston.
- 1838** *16 February*. Henry Brooks Adams, son of Charles Francis Adams, born in Boston.
- 1840** *November*. Charles Francis Adams elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives; he serves in the state legislature until 1845, leading a small antislavery faction.
- 1841** *February–March*. John Quincy Adams successfully defends the *Amistad* African captives before the U.S. Supreme Court. Read Adams's Diary entry of 29 March 1841 against the slave trade.
- 1846** *May*. John Quincy Adams votes against declaration of war with Mexico.
- 20 November*. John Quincy Adams suffers a cerebral hemorrhage in Boston.
- 1858** *November*. Charles Francis Adams elected to Congress as a Republican; reelected in 1860.
- 1861** *20 March*. At the urging of Secretary of State William Seward, President Lincoln appoints Charles Francis Adams minister plenipotentiary to Great Britain.
- 1–13 May*. Charles Francis Adams sails to England with Abigail Brooks Adams and their children, Mary, Brooks, and Henry (who serves as his father's private secretary).
- 16 May*. Charles Francis Adams presents credentials as minister to Great Britain, just as Britain recognizes Confederate belligerency and declares its neutrality.
- 1863** *5 September*. Regarding the imminent sailing of the new British-built ironclad rams for the Confederacy, Charles Francis Adams writes to Britain's foreign minister Lord Russell that "It would be superfluous in me to point out to your lordship that this is war." Britain agrees to seize the ships and strictly observe its neutrality.

1868 *April–May*. Charles Francis Adams resigns his post and presents his recall as minister to Great Britain.

1871 – 72 Charles Francis Adams successfully negotiates the *Alabama* claims in Washington, London, and Geneva.

1885 *21 November*. Charles Francis Adams dies in Boston.

Timeline is a truncated version of that created by the Adams Editorial Project found at www.masshist.org.