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Andrew Adams (1736–1797)



Andrew Adams served as a delegate to the Continental Congress from Connecticut (1778), was a signer of the Articles of Confederation (1778), and, just prior to his death, served as a member of the Connecticut Supreme Court (1789-97), rising to serve as chief justice of that body (1793-97) [1].

Born in Stratford, Connecticut, on 7 January 1736, Adams was, according to the small biography of him put together in an 1856 work, “[b]eing of a very respectable family.” [2] According to the *Daughters of the American Revolution*, Adams was the son of Samuel Adams, no apparent relation to the Samuel Adams who played such a pivotal role in the period before and during the American Revolution, and his wife Mary (née Fairchild) Adams. As other young men during this time, he apparently received a “classical education” (the description of studies dealing with history, languages, and other subjects), and graduated from Yale College (now Yale University), in Connecticut in 1760. Four years later, in 1764, Adams began the practice of law in the city of Litchfield, Connecticut, and he soon became one of that city’s leading attorneys. He

married Eunice Buel, and they would have one child, a son, also named Andrew Adams.

Adams served in numerous elected and appointed positions in Connecticut. He also served as a member of the Connecticut Council of Safety for two years. When the war against Britain broke out in 1775, he volunteered for service in the Connecticut militia, seeing action and rising to the rank of Colonel. He then returned to Connecticut, where he was elected to the state House of Representatives, serving from 1776 to 1781, and serving as the Speaker of that body in 1779 and 1780. More importantly, Adams served as a delegate to the Continental Congress in 1778. And while he did not sign the Declaration of Independence, he was a signatory to the Articles of Confederation in 1778. In his history of the men and correspondence of those delegates who served in the Continental Congress, historian Edmund Cody Burnett explains that Adams was elected on 11 October 1777 but “did not attend in 1777.” [3] According to the “Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774-2005,” Adams is listed as a member of the Continental Congress, having served, according to the directory, in 1778, the same year that he signed the Articles of Confederation, the first official governmental blueprint of the new American nation that came into existence in 1783. [4]

Andrew Adams was considered a leading player in not only Connecticut politics of the period, but in national politics as well. In August 1778, Jonathan Trumbull, the governor of Connecticut and the older brother of Continental Congress delegate Joseph Trumbull, wrote to Roger Sherman, Titus Hosmer, and Adams, on the military movements being conducted in the area of what is now the states of New England:

Our expectations from the expedition against Rhode Island are again like[ly] to be blasted. The French fleet, which have suffered considerably from the late very unusual gale of wind, have taken a resolution to go for Boston to refit and repair their damages.

This event will put our army on too precarious a footing to remain long on an island; unless some sudden and desperate attempt is made (which I wish them to avoid) I think their operation against the enemy must cease and their whole attention be turned to getting themselves safe landed on the continent. I wish this may be affected without loss, I was in hopes the fleet would have run themselves into New London [Connecticut], where I think their damages might be repaired with safety to them, and the same time their lying in harbour so contiguous to Rhode Island might have proved a security to the operations of the army. But they are gone, and with them are fled our fond hopes of success from this enterprise. This event will put a new aspect on our affairs. The Lord reigneth is our hope; let it be our trust and confidence. [5]

Adams and Hosmer, from their posts as delegates to the Continental Congress from Philadelphia, answered the governor's message: "The desire we have of preserving every appearance of attention in our correspondence with your Excellency induces us to embrace this opportunity to write to Major Bigelow [6], though nothing very material hath come to our knowledge worthy to be communicated. The finances of the States are at present the principal subject of the deliberations of Congress. Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday of every week are set apart for this purpose; but little progress is yet made. A plan of organizing a Board of Treasury is laid before Congress, and is to be taken into consideration this day. It is long and complex-time will not allow us to attempt giving you an abstract of it." [7]

In 1789, a year after leaving the Continental Congress, Adams was named by Governor Trumbull as a member of the Connecticut Executive Council. That same year, Trumbull appointed Adams to a seat as a judge on the Supreme Court of Connecticut. Rising to become one of the leading counselors on that court, in 1793 Adams was named as chief justice, a post he held until his death.

Adams died in Litchfield, Connecticut, on 26 November 1797 at the age of 63. His remains were interred, according to his Congressional biography, in the East Cemetery in Litchfield,

Connecticut. Today, that burial ground is officially known as the West Cemetery, still located in Litchfield. In 1909, historian Dwight C. Kilbourn wrote that, at that time, Adams' tombstone in the West Burying Ground was "a rapidly crumbling marble slab." The stone read, "In memory of the Hon. Andrew Adams, Esq., Chief Judge of the Superior Court, who died November 27, 1797, in the 63d year of his age. Having filled many distinguished offices with great ability and dignity, he was promoted to the highest judicial office in the State, which he held for several years, in which his eminent talents shone with uncommon lustre, and were exerted to the great advantage of the public and the honor of the High Court in which he presided. He made an early profession of religion, and zealously sought to protect its true Interests. He lived a Life and died the Death of a Christian. His filial Piety and paternal tenderness are held in sweet Remembrance." [8]

[1] Adams biography from "Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774-2005" (House Document 108-222) (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2005), 541.

[2] Marshall, James V., "The United States Manual of Biography and History" (Philadelphia: James B. Smith & Co., 1856), 136.

[3] See the short entry on Adams in Edmund Cody Burnett, ed., "Letters of Members of the Continental Congress" (Washington, DC: Published by the Carnegie Institution of Washington; eight volumes, 1921-36), II:xxxix.

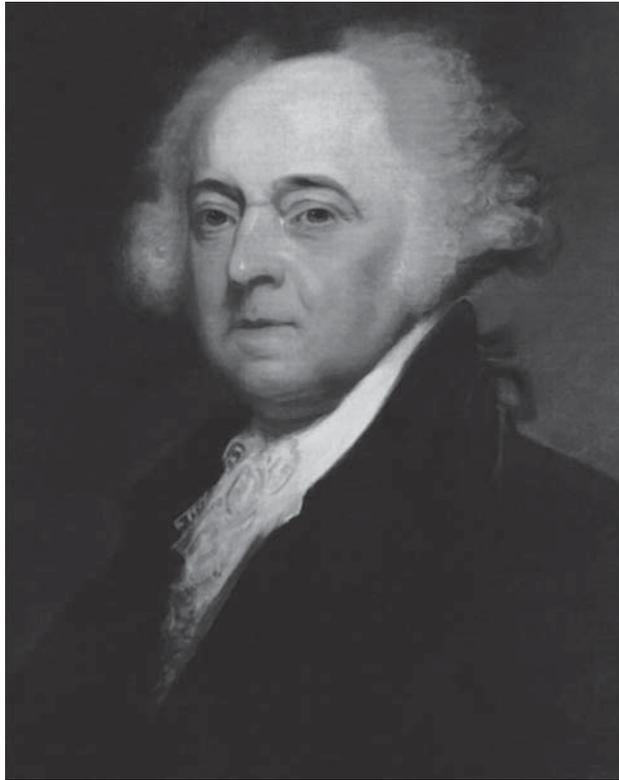
[4] "Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774-2005. The Continental Congress, September 5, 1774, to October 21, 1788, and The Congress of the United States, From the First Through the One Hundred Eighth Congresses, March 4, 1789, to January 3, 2005, Inclusive" (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2005), 541.

[5] Trumbull to Sherman, Hosmer, and Adams, 25 August 1778, in "The Papers of Jonathan Trumbull" in "Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Seventh Series, Vol. II" (Boston: Published by the Society, 1902), 256-57.

[6] No name is given here for this "Major Bigelow"; however, Benedict Arnold mentions in his *Memoirs* that a "Major Bigelow" served as the head of the 15th Massachusetts Regiment, and lists of officers of this unit show a Colonel Timothy Bigelow to have been at its command, so it may be assumed that the unnamed Bigelow may be him.

[7] Adams and Hosmer to Trumbull, 29 August 1778, in "The Papers of Jonathan Trumbull," 257-59.

[8] Kilbourn, Dwight C., "The Bench and Bar of Litchfield County, Connecticut, 1709-1909: Biographical Sketches of Members. History and Catalogue of the Litchfield Law School. Historical Notes" (Litchfield, CT: Published by the Author, 1909; reprint, Clark, NJ: The Lawbook Exchange, 2002), 217.

John Adams (1735–1826)

The influence and range of service that John Adams offered to the building of the American nation is incalculable. A diplomat, a writer and diarist, an agitator and a lawyer, a farmer and politician, he rose to become one of the leading members of the Continental Congress and, in 1788, was elected the first vice president of the United States. In 1796 he was elected the nation's second president, after George Washington, but served only one term before losing in an acrimonious defeat to his former ally and friend, Thomas Jefferson, in 1800. The two men, who reconciled in the years before they both died on the same day—4 July 1826, the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence—were considered elder statesmen in the second decade of the 19th century, giving their nation important leadership when it needed it the most.

The son of John Adams and his wife, Susanna (née Boylston) Adams, and the eldest of three sons, John Adams was born in Braintree (now Quincy), about 10 miles south of Boston, in the Massachusetts Bay Colony, on 19 October 1735. Andrew Adams, a member of the famed Adams

family of Massachusetts, compiled a genealogical history of the clan in 1898. According to this history, Henry Adams, a native of Devonshire, left with his family for the New World about 1630, settling in and becoming one of the original landowners in the town of Braintree, which was in 1639. His great-great-grandson, John Adams, would one day serve as president of the country that Henry Adams sailed to in that third decade of the seventeenth century. John Adams (1691–1760), the father of John Adams, was a deacon and a shoemaker in Braintree. Although he had not desired to be involved in religion, his own father had insisted that he follow in the footsteps of his own uncle, Joseph Adams, who had been a noted clergyman in the area. As such, the elder John Adams had attended Harvard College (now Harvard University), and had become a leader in his church [1].

In 1871, Charles Francis Adams, the grandson of the subject of this biography, explained, “It is in the order of the dispensations of Providence to adapt the characters of men to the times in which they live. The grandfather of John Adams had given to the eldest of his twelve children a college education for his only inheritance. And a precious inheritance it was; it made him for nearly seventy years an instructor of religion and virtue. And such was the anticipation and design of the father of John Adams, who, not without some urgent advice and even solicitation, prevailed upon his son to prepare himself for college.” [2] On his mother's side, John Adams was descended from a family that included Dr. Zabdiel Boylston, who introduced the first inoculations for smallpox into the American colonies.

Adams wrote about his family in his diary, now housed at the Massachusetts Historical Society:

My Father by his Industry and Enterprize soon became a Person of more Property and Consideration in the Town than his Patron had been. He became a Select Man, a Militia Officer and a Deacon in the Church. He was the honestest Man I ever knew. In Wisdom, Piety, Benevolence and Charity In proportion to his Education and Sphere of Life, I have never seen his Superiour . . . My Mother was Suzanna Boylston a Daughter of Peter Boylston of Brooklyne, the oldest son of Thomas Boylston a Surgeon and Apothecary

who came from London in 1656, and married a Woman by the Name of Gardner of that Town, by whom he had Issue Peter my Grandfather, Zabdiel the Physician, who first introduced into the British Empire the Practice of Inoculation for the Small Pox, Richard, Thomas and Dudley and several Daughters. [3]

Following in his father's footsteps, John Adams studied at Harvard, and among his instructors there was Josiah Quincy (1709-1784), a noted educator and merchant who became a close friend and correspondent with Benjamin Franklin, but who would become embittered and estranged from his own son, also named Josiah Quincy (1744-1775), who would take up the fight for American independence in opposition to his father. Tasked with presenting the grievances of his fellow colonists to the English government, he sailed for America but died before he could reach land at the age of 31. [4] In 1755, John Adams was presented with a bachelor of arts degree from Harvard; three years later, in 1758, the same school awarded him a master of arts degree. William Cranch, who would later serve as an official reporter of the US Supreme Court, wrote in 1827, "It is said that, while at college, he [Adams] was distinguished by great assiduity in his studies, a retentive memory, acuteness of reasoning, originality and boldness of thought, strength of language, and an openness and honesty of character, which could neither assume, nor tolerate disguise." [5]

Adams' grandson, Charles Francis Adams, who had a storied career as a diplomat in service to the American government, most notable during the American Civil War, wrote in a memoir of his grandfather published in 1856, "From the time of the admission of Mr. Adams to the bar, he resided at his father's house, in Braintree; and, after the decease of his father, which happened on the 25th of May 1761, he remained with his mother, until his marriage, in 1764." [6] John Adams also would live nearly a decade longer than the woman who was to become his wife, mate, and lifelong partner in everything he would do, Abigail Smith Adams. Before his marriage to Abigail Smith, Adams had been engaged to Abigail's older cousin, Hannah Quincy, but that had ended. Somehow Adams and Hannah's

much younger cousin found each other, despite their age difference of nine years [7]

Born as Abigail Smith on 11 November 1744 in Weymouth, Massachusetts, she, like her husband, had a father actively involved in the church, although the Reverend William Smith gave his daughter the upbringing few at that time enjoyed. However, he did not believe that women should be educated, and it was left to Abigail to educate herself. She became an active writer, encapsulating most of her life in letters and diaries. She read the great philosophers of history and taught herself French. Just prior to her death, she told her family to "Pray, burn all my Letters," but her wishes were ignored, and today we have the rich history of the love shown between John and Abigail Adams through their voluminous correspondence. The two met while John was courting Abigail's cousin, and, from John's letters, we find that he did not find her, at least at first, a particularly interesting person. It was through John's good friend William Cranch, who was courting and would later marry Abigail's older sister Mary in 1762, that Adams became more acquainted with Abigail. He quickly found her expansive knowledge, rare for a woman in those days, to be most attractive to him. And thus began a romance that would last until Abigail's passing in 1818. Even when the two were separated—during John's service in the Continental Congress, as well as his work as a diplomat in Europe, and continuing throughout his time first as vice president until the end of his sole term in office as president—the two corresponded. In all, from 1762 until 1801, they penned some 1,160 letters to each other, all of which survive. The love that these two people showed for each other, as their nation struggled to become an independent country, is as much a part of history as any official correspondence a politician may turn out. In one letter, dated 4 October 1762, Adams, addressing Abigail as "Miss Adorable," penned to her, "By the same Token that the Bearer hereof *satt up* with you last night I hereby order you to give him, as many Kisses, and as many Hours of your Company after 9 OClock as he shall please to Demand and charge them to my Account. This Order, or Requisition call it which you will is in Consideration of a similar order

Upon Aurelia for the like favour, and I presume I have good Right to draw upon you for the Kisses as I have given two or three Millions at least, when one has been recd, and of Consequence the Account between us is immensely in favour of yours.” [8] Historian Rosemary Keller, in a 1977 dissertation on Abigail Adams, explained:

In 1763, Abigail Smith and John Adams were engaged in a courtship of more profound consequences than their stern Puritan forebears could have conceived. Their marriage, which took place the next year, developed into one of the remarkable unions in history and culminated over several generations in America’s most distinguished family line. Even in their early love letters, the nineteen-year-old parson’s daughter demonstrated why she was an exceptional woman of her day who would become the firm force behind the rise of this family dynasty. In a letter written in September 1763 to the aspiring lawyer, nine years her senior, he reflected that “they were both cast in the same mould [sic].” While his might be of a “harder smile,” she surmised that they probably possess “an eaquil [sic] quantity of Steel.” [9]

John Adams would probably have remained as a lawyer, perhaps a famous one, in Boston, if not for the events of 5 March 1770, which catapulted Adams, as well as the American colonies, on a path towards war with England. A number of colonists assembled and surrounded a British soldier who was guarding the customs house in Boston. Panicked, the sentry’s commander, Capt. Thomas Preston, sent reinforcements to help the lone soldier. Whether or not the soldiers felt their lives in danger, or if the angry crowd reacted when they were unarmed, will never be known. What is known is that some of the troops fired into the crowd, killing five and wounding several others. Now known as the Boston Massacre, the riot caused intense hatred of the British and threatened to ignite potential warfare. John Adams, almost alone in his thinking, came to the defense of the British troops, believing that they had been provoked. “Endeavors had been systematically pursued for many months by certain busy characters to excite quarrels, reencounters [sic] and combats, single or compound, in the night, between the inhabitants of the lower class, and the soldiers, and at all risks to enkindle an immortal hatred between them,”

he explained in a letter. “I suspected that this was the explosion which had been intentionally wrought up by designing men, who knew what they were aiming at, better than the instruments employed. If these poor tools should be prosecuted for any of their illegal conduct they must be punished. If the soldiers in self-defense should kill any of them, they must be tried, and if truth was respected, and the law prevailed, must be acquitted.” [10]

A 19th century magazine, *The New-England Galaxy and United States Literary Advertiser*, explained in its edition of 10 June 1825:

The tragedy of the 5th of March, 1770, denominated, in the language of that period, “The Boston Massacre,” had wrought the whole people of Massachusetts, and above all the inhabitants of Boston, to the highest pitch of rage and indignation. The populace breathed only vengeance. Even minds better instructed, and of higher principles than the multitude, in the excitement of the moment, could not endure the doctrine, that it was possible for the armed soldiers to fire and kill unarmed citizens, and commit a crime less than murder. Political animosity and natural antipathy to troops stationed in the metropolis, sharpened this vindictive spirit. The friends of the government were either silent, or only expressed regret and lamentation at the event. The friends of freedom were loud in their indignation, and clamorous for that justice which declares, that “blood shall be the penalty for blood.” [11]

Adams took the side of the soldiers, and, with the aid of his cousin, Samuel Adams, defended the soldiers in court and got an acquittal. Historians have long pondered just why John Adams, who would become one of those colonists who helped to break away from England five years later, would side with British troops over his fellow colonists. In 1787, Adams wrote to a friend, Benjamin Hichborn, “I begin to suspect that some Gentlemen who had more Zeal than Knowledge in the year 1770 will soon discover that I had good Policy, as well as sound Law on my side, when I ventured to lay open before our People the Laws against Riots, Routs, and unlawful assemblies. Mobs will never do—to govern States or command armies. I was as sensible of it in 1770 as I am in 1787. To talk of Liberty in such a state of things!” [12]

Perhaps around this time—there is no exact date of its occurrence—Adams was involved in an incident that demonstrates his general demeanor. As noted in a letter to *The Times* of London in 1851: “When John Adams was a young man he was invited to dine with the Court and Bar at the house of Judge Paine, an eminent Loyalist, at Worcester. When the wine was circulated round the table Judge Paine gave as a toast, ‘the King.’ Some of the Whigs were about to refuse to drink it; but Mr. Adams whispered to them to comply, saying, ‘We shall have an opportunity to return the compliment.’ At length, when John Adams was desired to give a toast, he gave ‘the Devil.’ As the host was about to resent the supposed indignity, his wife calmed him, and turned the laugh upon Mr. Adams by immediately saying, ‘My dear, as the gentlemen has seen fit to drink to ‘our’ friend, let us by no means refuse, in our turn, to drink to ‘his.’” [13]

Despite his defense of the British soldiers in Boston, Adams was nevertheless a harsh critic of the policies of the so-called “Mother Country,” and he spoke out against them. When tensions between England and her colonies had reached a decisive point, calls went out from individual colonies for a meeting of delegates from the colonies to shape their own policies in defiance of the Crown and Parliament. In June 1774, the Massachusetts House elects John Adams, his cousin Samuel Adams, and Thomas Cushing as three of the colony’s five delegates (a fourth, Robert Treat Paine, did attend, but the fifth, James Bowdoin, did not) to a “Continental Congress” to be held in the “national capitol” of Philadelphia. As historian William Dehler wrote in 1939, “Fearing that the Royal Governor [Gen. Thomas Gage of the British army] would dissolve their assembly, the member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives ordered the doors of the chamber to be locked, June 17, 1774 . . . By an overwhelming majority they voted to send delegates to Philadelphia to consult with the delegates from the other colonies and to determine ‘wise’ and proper measures . . . for the recover and establishment of their just rights & liberties, civil and religious, and the restoration of union & harmony between Great Britain and the Colonies.” [14]

Adams finished his circuit duties (the court for all of New England was in present-day Maine),

then departed Braintree, his wife and his family, on 10 August 1774 for the trip to Philadelphia. On 29 September, he wrote to William Tudor on the conditions in that city:

You can have no adequate Idea of the Pleasures of the Difficulties of the Errand I am now upon. The Congress is Such an Assembly as never before came together on a Sudden, in any Part of the World. Here are Fortunes, Abilities, Learning, Eloquence, Acuteness equal to any I ever met with [in] my Life. Here is a Diversity of Religious Educations, Manners, Interests, Such as it would Seem almost impossible to unite in any one Plan of Conduct. Every Question is discussed with a Moderation, and an Acuteness and a minuteness equal to that of Queen Elizabeths [sic] privy Council. This occasions infinite Delays. We are under Obligations of Secrecy in every Thing except the Single Vote which you have Seen approving the Resolutions of the County of Suffolk. What Effect this Vote may have with you is uncertain. What you will do, God knows. You Say you look up to the Congress. It is well you Should: but I hope you will not expect too much from Us. [15]

During his time in that First Continental Congress, Adams made his mark by proposing the naming of George Washington as the commander-in-chief of the Continental Army, and he worked to help draft, with his friend, Thomas Jefferson, the document that came to be known as the Declaration of Independence. As well, he helped to draft the “Model Treaty of 1776.” Historian Felix Gilbert wrote, “The American-French alliance, concluded in 1778, was a further significant step toward traditional diplomacy. Astonishment has frequently been expressed about the success of the American negotiators in getting their ideas excepted by Europe’s most powerful monarchy. Indeed, the Treaty of Amity and Commerce between France and the United States followed closely by the Model Treaty of 1776 with its new and radical principles for commerce and navigation.” [16]

During his time in the Continental Congress, Adams remained a writer of many letters—to friends, to intimates, and to others. In a letter, discovered in England in 1931, addressed to Archibald Bulloch, the governor of Georgia on 1 July 1776, he wrote, “This morning is assigned for the greatest debate of all—a Declaration that these Colonies are free and independent States

has been reported by a Committee, appointed some weeks ago for that purpose, and this day, or to-morrow, is to determine its fate.” [17]

In a letter to Joseph Ward, the Muster-Master General of the Continental Army, later the Commissary-General of Prisoners, Adams, from Philadelphia, wrote:

It is a great work to fortify Boston harbour, and will require many men—But however, I am not sufficiently informed to judge of the propriety of this measure—if there is the least reason to expect that Howe’s army will return to Boston, it was wrong to remove so many men so soon, but it is hard to believe that that army will very suddenly return to that place. The Militia of that Province are tremendous to the enemy, and well they may be, for I believe they don’t know of each other . . . Every motive of self-preservation, of honour, profit, and glory, call upon our people to fortify the harbour so as to be impregnable. It will make a rendezvous for men of war and privateers, and a mart of trade. [18]

Adams became disgusted with that First Continental Congress, which did little more than advocate the refusal of merchants in the colonies to not purchase British goods shipped into the individual colonies. Many of his fellow delegates saw him and others like him as radicals who merely wanted to break away from England and declare independence. This frustrated Adams.

At the Second Continental Congress, the follow-up meeting of delegates, Adams took charge. This second congress met following the opening shots of what would become the American Revolution, which began at the Massachusetts towns of Lexington and Concord. With this new attitude, that colonists now had to fight, and needed to get their independence, Adams and others like him were able to shift control of that second congress to their way of thinking. Benjamin Rush, a fellow delegate from Pennsylvania, wrote, “He was a most sensible and forcible speaker. Every member of Congress in 1776 acknowledged him to be first in the house. Dr. Brownson (of Georgia) used to say when he spoke, he fancied an angel was let down from heaven to illumine the Congress. He saw the whole of a subject as a single glance, and by a happy union of the powers of

reasoning and persuasion often succeeded in carrying measures which were at first sight of an unpopular stature.” [19]

From 1774 to 1777, Adams worked himself into near exhaustion. Not being able to go home for any length of time because of the distance of the journey back to Massachusetts, and not being able to see his wife and correspond with her only through numerous letters, all served to nearly destroy his health. In 1777, he retired from the Continental Congress, when he was named as a joint commissioner to go to England to negotiate a peace with the British government. He took along with him his eldest son, John Quincy Adams, to France to see that country and to gain foreign experience, experience that the younger Adams utilized in eventually serving as secretary of state and, then, as president of the United States. The defeat of the British Army at Saratoga in September 1777 left little doubt as to what would happen between the American representatives and those representing Britain in Paris for the peace talks: the Americans had the upper hand and would not settle for anything less than full independence. The British had little choice but to sign the treaty. Adams returned to Massachusetts in August 1779, where, now living not in a colony but in one of the 13 American states, he assisted in writing the state constitution. Adams melded the document to reflect his own belief in what he wrote in a letter as the state government being a “government of laws, and not of men.” Writing to fellow Continental Congress delegate (and later vice president) Elbridge Gerry, Adams explained, “I am clear for three branches in the legislature, and the committee have reported as such, though awkwardly expressed . . . We have so many men of wealth, of ambitious spirits, of intrigue, of luxury and corruption, that incessant factions will disturb our peace without it, and, indeed, there is too much reason to fear, with it. The executive, which ought to be the reservoir of wisdom, as the legislature is of liberty, without this weapon of defence, will be run down like a hare before the hunters. But I have not time to enlarge.” [20]

Before his draft constitution could come up for a vote, Adams was named by the Continental Congress to go to France to sign a peace and commercial treaty with Britain. He took along his sons, John Quincy Adams and

Charles Adams. The talks broke down over Adams' insistence that Britain recognize the independence of the United States. Adams also clashed with the French Foreign Minister, the Comte Charles Gravier de Vergennes, when Adams refused to call on the Continental Congress to repay French debts in America in full instead of depreciated currency, arguing that France, as the first ally of the new nation, would gain exponentially in trading that Britain could not secure. Adams wrote to Vergennes, "No man is more ready than I am to acknowledge the obligations we are under to France; but the flourishing state of her marine and commerce, and the decisive influence of her councils and negociations [sic] in Europe, which all the world will allow us to be owing, in a great measure, to the separation of America from her inveterate enemy, and to her connexions [sic] with the United States, shall that the obligations are mutual. And no foreign merchants ought to expect to be treated in America better than her native merchants, who have hazarded their property through the same perils of the seas and of enemies." [21]

Unable to get France to move any further, Adams left for Holland, where he also received diplomatic recognition of the United States, as well as a much-needed loan from the Dutch. In November 1782 he returned to France, after the British relented and decided to sign the peace treaty with their former colonies in exchange for an end to the war and commercial relations. While fellow delegate (and US minister to France) Benjamin Franklin had already ironed out much of what would be the final treaty, he wanted more protections for France, but Adams worked closely with one of the British negotiators, Richard Oswald, to forge an agreement. Explaining the situation in a letter to the president of the Continental Congress, Samuel Huntington, Adams wrote, "We ought, therefore, to be cautious how we magnify our ideas, and exaggerate our expressions of the generosity and magnanimity of any of these powers. Let us treat them with gratitude, but with dignity. Let us remember what is due to ourselves and to our posterity, as well as to them. Let us, above all things, avoid as much as possible entangling ourselves with their wars or politics. Our business with them and theirs with

us, is commerce, not politics, much less war. America has been the sport of European wars and politics long enough." [22]

Adams remained in Europe until 1788, negotiating for additional loans from Holland, gaining diplomatic recognition from several European nations and serving, from 1785 until 1788, as the first US minister to the Court of St. James, the post known today as the US Ambassador to the United Kingdom. With his work in Europe finished he sailed for home, this time with his wife and children by his side.

While he had been gone, the nation had completed and confirmed the new US Constitution, which set up national elections for president and vice president in 1788. Adams was named as one of the first candidates for president of the United States. Although he was extremely popular in the country as a whole, he could not overcome the popularity of General George Washington, and Adams received 34 of the 69 available electoral votes, giving him the vice presidency. Adams wrote, "I know not how it is, but in proportion as danger threatens I grow calm. I am very apprehensive that a desperate anti-federal party will provoke all Europe by their insolence. But my country has, in its wisdom, contrived for me the most insignificant office that ever the invention of men contrived or his imagination conceived; and as I can do neither good nor evil, I must be borne away by others and meet the common fate." [23] Although Adams felt that he had been installed into a meaningless office, nevertheless he worked closely with President Washington to formulate policy for the new nation. Most of his time was taken by serving as president of the US Senate, where he set a record of breaking ties in votes. In 1792, Adams was reelected vice president with Washington, this time receiving 77 of the possible 134 electoral votes, defeating New York governor George Clinton. Four years later, when Washington begged off a third term, Adams was the candidate of the Federalist Party. Although he ran with a vice presidential candidate, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, prior to the passage of the 11th amendment to the US Constitution candidates ran separately, with the two top vote-getting candidates being elected. While Adams received the most electoral votes—71—it was Anti-Federalist candidate Thomas Jefferson, who had once been a close friend of

Adams, who received the second most number of electoral votes, 68, and was elected vice president.

During the four years of his administration, Adams found himself in one controversy after another. Just days after he took office in March 1797, Adams learned that France had begun to seize American trading ships that were sailing for England, and that Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, the US Minister to France, had been dismissed from representing his country before the French government. The country prepared for war with France. Adams convened his cabinet and sent John Marshall and Elbridge Gerry to join Pinckney in France to negotiate with the French government an end to the crisis. When Marshall and Gerry reached France and joined Pinckney, they found that they were refused a meeting with the French Foreign Minister, the Marquis de Talleyrand. Instead, the French government sent four emissaries—Lucien Hauteval, Jean Hottinger, Nicholas Hubbard, and Pierre Bellamy—to meet with the American delegates. They presented the three Americans with conditions that had to be met before they could meet Talleyrand: The United States would have to give France a low interest loan, would have to pay any claims lodged by American merchants for ships and goods seized by France, and pay a large bribe directly to Talleyrand himself. The three Americans, shocked and disgusted at the terms, refused. Marshall and Pinckney returned to the United States, while Gerry remained in France to try to help stop a war from breaking out. When Adams heard of the disgraceful way the three Americans had been treated, he prepared for war. The nation as a whole was stunned; the four Frenchmen (for some reason, only three seem to have been named) were given the nicknames “X, Y, and Z,” and the meeting was called the XYZ Affair. While a land war never occurred, fighting among American and French ships did occur. The crisis led to intense negotiations, leading to the Convention of 1800, also known as the Treaty of Mortefontaine.

It was because of this so-called “Quasi-War” with France that led the government to establish a Department of the Navy, and initiated, under

Adams, construction of the first warships that would give the United States power on the seas; among these was the *USS Constitution*, also known as “Old Ironsides,” which is still in existence and is retired as a visitor’s site in Charlestown, Massachusetts.

Perhaps the most controversial matter during Adams’ administration was the passage in Congress of the Alien and Sedition Acts in 1798. These pieces of legislation, enacted in response to the French Revolution which overthrew the government as well as the monarchy led by King Louis XVI, were actually four pieces of separate legislation passed by the Federalist-dominated Congress. It ordered the imprisonment or deportation of those considered “dangerous to the peace and safety of the United States,” extending the period of residency needed for American citizenship from five to fourteen years. The most controversial of these laws was the Sedition Act, or, as it was known, “An act for the punishment of certain crimes again the United States.” The act set penalties against persons who would “unlawfully combine or conspire together, with intent to oppose any measure or measures of the government of the United States, which are or shall be directed by proper authority, or to impede the operation of any law of the United States, or to intimidate or prevent any person holding a place or office in or under the government of the United States, from undertaking, performing, or executing his trust or duty . . .” [24] Writing to Vice President Thomas Jefferson on 20 May 1798, James Madison stated, “The Alien bill proposed in the Senate is a monster that must forever disgrace its parents. I should not have supposed it possible that such a one could have been engendered in either House and still persuade myself that it cannot possibly be fathered by both. It is truly to be deplored that a standing army should be let in upon us by the absence of a few sound votes. It may however all be for the best.” [25]

The laws became an integral issue in the 1800 president campaign, a rematch of the 1796 contest between Adams and Jefferson. The vice president’s supporters used the Alien & Sedition Acts as a cudgel against the president, with both sides employing vile threats and cursing few campaigns have ever seen. In the end, Adams lost to Jefferson, 73 electoral votes

to 65, and, after one term, Adams was retired from office.

Returning to Braintree, Adams enjoyed the first break from service in more than 30 years. He and his wife Abigail, their children, and grandchildren, all congregated at the Adams' residence. Adams himself remained connected to politics, writing books and articles and letters on numerous subjects. As evident from all of his writings and correspondence, Adams was a staunch opponent of slavery. In a letter that Adams wrote from Quincy, Massachusetts, on 18 June 1819, he summed up his feelings about the practice:

The turpitude, the inhumanity, the cruelty and the infamy of the African commerce in slaves, have been so impressively represented to the public, by the highest powers of eloquence, that nothing I could say would increase the just odium in which it is and ought to be held. Every measure of prudence, therefore, ought to be assumed, for the eventual total extirpation of slavery from the United States I have, through my whole life, held the practice of slavery in such abhorrence that I have never owned a negro, or any other slave, though I have lived for many year [sic] in times when the practice was not disgraceful; when the best men of this vicinity thought it not inconsistent with their characters, and when it has cost me thousands of dollars for the labor and subsistence of freemen, which I might have saved by the purchase of negroes when they were very cheap.” [26]

Even while Jefferson was in office, the two men reconciled their differences, becoming, over the next two decades, close friends, as evidenced from their voluminous correspondence that survives. They wrote about a number of issues, including the political scene in America. They shared intimate moments in each others' lives, and comforted each other as loved ones passed away, including Adams' wife, Abigail, in 1818. Four years later, Jefferson wrote to Adams, “It is very long, my dear sir, since I have written to you. My dislocated wrist is now become so stiff that I write slowly and with pain, and therefore write as little as I can. Yet it is due to mutual friendship to ask once in a while how you do.” Adams replied, “Half an hour ago, I received, and, this moment, have heard read

for the third time, the best letter that was ever written by an octogenarian, dated June 1 . . . I have not sprained my wrist, but both my arms and hands are so overstrained that I cannot write a line . . . I cannot mount my horse, but I can walk three miles over a rugged, rocky mountain, and have done it within a month; yet I feel when sitting in my chair as if I could not rise out of it; and when risen, as if I could not walk across the room. My sight is very dim, hearing pretty good, memory poor enough.” [27]

On 4 July 1826, the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, both men were near death. At 1 p.m., Jefferson expired, at age 84. Adams, in Braintree, wanted to see the fireworks that evening. He told his attendant, “It is a great and glorious day.” His last words were, “Jefferson survives.” He did not know that the Sage of Monticello had preceded him in death. Adams was 91.

The former president, like Jefferson, was universally mourned in the nation he had served for so long. The *American Mercury* of Hartford, Connecticut, stated in an editorial, “That bold and energetic spirit which inspired the councils of America with the determination to become independent has ascended on high, and that eloquent tongue which urged its declaration on the fourth of July, 1776, on the fourth of July, 1826, was palsied in death.” [28] The *Daily National Intelligencer* of Washington, D.C. said, “The angel of death seems to have been walking with him for months, but was not permitted by Omnipotence to call him away until the Jubilee of American Liberty had fully come, and not then, until his soul had been cheered with the loud acclamation of a joyous People for the blessings of the day.” [29]

Historian Francis Russell, in his sweeping history of the Adams family, penned this about John Adams:

As [the] Second President of the United States, John Adams in his single term has been overshadowed by both his predecessor and successor. Yet this chubby, opinionated New Englander, stubborn and egotistical, was truly a Founding Father, one of the handful of men without whom it would be impossible to imagine later America. Washington, reserved and aloof, even while

President, became a symbol, a presence sufficient to chill the hand of anyone presumptuous enough to slap him on the back. The Father of his Country stood apart from ordinary humanity. Adams was all too obviously human, from his outer appearance to his tactlessly assertive manner, cranky, jealous, yet with a razor-sharp intellect and a keen awareness of his own weaknesses. An English diplomat considered him the most ungracious man he had ever encountered. Benjamin Franklin thought him “always an honest man, often a wise one, but sometimes in some things absolutely out of his senses.” The three-branched system of American constitutional with its built-in system of checks and balances owes more to him perhaps than to any other one man. Though he was equally opposed by Jefferson’s democratic and Hamilton’s aristocratic extremists, he did establish governmental precedents at a time when it was a question whether the American experiment would survive. [30]

See also: Samuel Adams; The Boston Massacre

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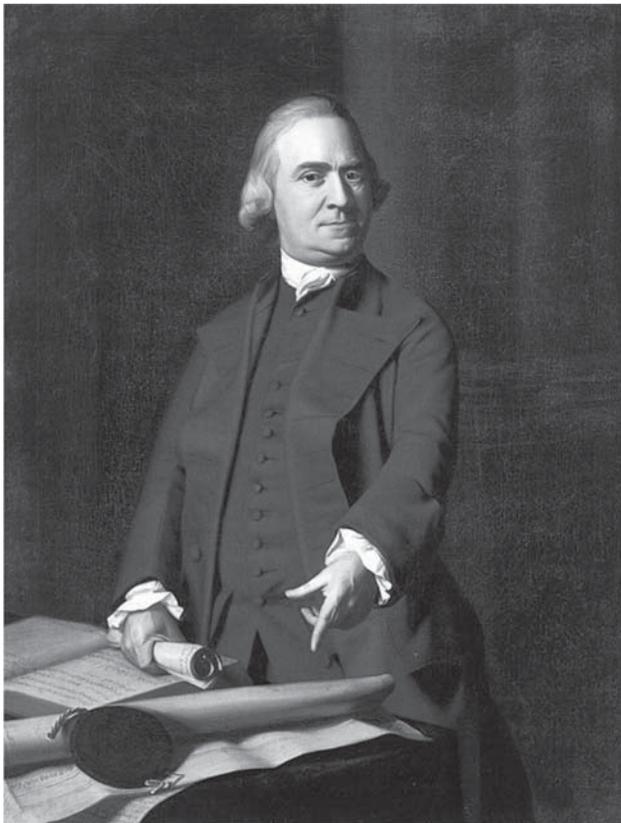
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Samuel Adams (1722–1803)



Although he had a lengthy political career in his native Massachusetts, Samuel Adams spent much of his life in the shadow of his cousin, John Adams. And while Samuel Adams rose to

serve, like John Adams, as a delegate to the Continental Congress, and was a signer of the Declaration of Independence, his also served as both lieutenant governor, and then governor, of Massachusetts.

A native of Massachusetts like his Adams' brethren, Samuel Adams was born in his family's home on Purchase Street in Boston on 27 September 1722, the son of Samuel Adams and his wife Mary (née Fifield) Adams. Historian George A. Simmons wrote in 1877, "His father was a man of good social and political standing, universally esteemed and respected; his mother, a woman of rare piety and dignity." [1] Historian James K. Hosmer also wrote in 1877, "The progenitor in America of the Adams family, so numerous and famous, was Henry Adams, who, with a family of eight children, settled at an early period near Mount Wollaston in Quincy. The inscription on his tombstone, written by President John Adams, describes him as having come from Devonshire, in England. English families of the name trace their descent from a remote Welsh ancestor; there is a possibility, therefore, of a mixture of Celtic blood in the stock." [2] Of Mary Adams, historian Ira Stoll stated, "Samuel Adams' mother, Mary, is described by one Adams biographer as a woman 'of severe religious principles.' Beyond that Mary Adams suffered the loss of nine of her twelve children, little is known of her." [3]

The elder Samuel Adams was a large landowner and investor in buildings and real estate in the Massachusetts Colony, as well as operating his own brewery. He was also elected to several colonial offices, including as a selectman and a member of the Massachusetts Provincial Assembly. His son, the subject of this biography, was slated to enter the ministry, and he was trained for location when he was sent to study at Harvard College (now Harvard University). He graduated from that institution in 1740; three years later he received a master's degree in theology. However, that appears to be the last time that Adams contemplated a life in the ministry. He never lost his ties to religion, later writing in a letter that he could "dwell on the Importance of Piety & Religion, of Industry & Frugality, of Prudence, Economy, Regularity & an even Government, all which are essential to

the Well being of a Family.” [4] Unable to find a vocation, Adams studied the law for a short time before going to work as a clerk in the counting house of one Thomas Cushing. Adams finally relented and joined his family brewing business, where he worked from 1756 to 1760. He also worked as a tax collector.

In the 1740s, family matters clashed with the political arena. The elder Adams was the owner and director of a large land bank that gave out loans for land and building purchases in Massachusetts. However, in an effort to force potential landowners to get their money from England rather than from colonial banks, in 1741, after years of restrictions imposed by London on all colonial currency, Britain banned the issuance of all paper money by the colonies. When the elder Adams joined with a group of merchants to issue their own currency, the royal governor, Jonathan Belcher, opposed the plan and, to strike back at Adams, fired him from his position as a justice of the peace. A new royal governor, William Shirley, also opposed Adams, and when the colonial legislature named the elder Adams for a seat on the Governor’s Council, an advisory body, in 1746, Shirley vetoed the move. By this time, however, Shirley, his entire administration, as well as British rule, were growing more and more unpopular in Massachusetts. Desiring to enter the political realm, the younger Adams was elected by the Boston Town Meeting in March 1747 as a clerk of the town market. At the same time, Adams joined with several friends to found *The Independent Advertiser*, a journal that opposed the Shirley administration, with Adams serving as editor. The first issue appeared in January 1748 and remained as a weekly until it went out of business in 1750. Both Adams’ were thorns in the side of the royal government. Governor Shirley later wrote in a letter asking “where the Devil this brace of Adamases come from.” [5]

The elder Adams, perhaps from the effects of fighting to stave off the collapse of his family’s assets from British rule, died on 8 March 1748, two months shy of his fiftieth birthday. Although there is no evidence that his son wrote his eulogy, *The Independent Advertiser* wrote that he was “one who well understood and rightly pursued the Civil and Religious Interests of this People.” It called him “a true New-England Man” and “an Honest Patriot.” [6]

The death of his father gave Samuel Adams a new impetus. He had come to believe that the British administration in the colonies was corrupt, incompetent, and unjust, and he set out to find ways to chip away at the power of the colonial government. In 1749 he married Elizabeth Checkley; the couple would have two children prior to her death in 1757. In 1764, Adams married Elizabeth Wells, but they had no children together.

In 1765, Adams was elected as a member of the Massachusetts General Court, the lower house of the Massachusetts colonial legislature, to fill the vacancy left by the death of Oxenbridge Thacher. Adams served there until 1774; in 1766, when he was reelected, the General Court named him as the clerk of that body. Adams took a leading role in opposing the harsh economic and other matters enacted by the British Parliament in London against the colonies. When Governor Francis Bernard supported these measures, Adams delivered a speech in the General Court giving his views on these subjects. He said:

Furthermore, your Excellency tells us that the right of the Parliament to make laws for the American Colonies remains indisputable in Westminster. Without contending this point, we beg leave just to observe that the charter of this Province invests the General Assembly with the power of making laws for its internal government and taxation; and that this charter has never yet been forfeited. The Parliament has a right to make all laws within the limits of their own Constitution. Among these, is the right of representation in the same body which exercises the power of taxation. There is a necessity that the subjects of America should exercise this power within themselves, otherwise they can have no share in that most essential right, for they are not represented in Parliament, and indeed we think it impracticable. Your Excellency’s assertion leads us to think that of a different mind with regard to this very material point, and that you suppose we are represented; but the sense of the nation itself seems always to have been otherwise. The right of the Colonies to make their own laws and tax themselves has been never, that we know of, questioned; but has been constantly recognized by the King and Parliament. The very supposition that the Parliament, though the supreme power over the subjects of Britain universally, should yet conceive of a despotic power within themselves, would be most

disrespectful; and we have it to your Excellency's consideration, whether to suppose an indisputable rights in any government to tax the subjects without their consent, does not include the idea of such a power. [7]

The British—in London, as well as their representatives in the colonies—did not listen, or care to listen, to the concerns of the colonists. In 1764, the British Parliament passed the Sugar Act, a revision of the Sugar and Molasses Act of 1733. Also known as the American Revenue Act, this law enacted a tax in the colonies on sugar, wine, and other commodities. This was quickly followed a year later by the Stamp Act, also known as the Duties in American Colonies Act, which raised prices on all paper products utilized in the colonies: this included newspapers, paper for letter writing, ship and merchants' bills of sale, and even playing cards. Instead of ameliorating the growing anger of the colonists, the acts pushed them even further towards a potential movement of independence from London—ideas which up until that time had been whispered only by those considered too radical in the colonies to be listened to. Samuel Adams was named as one of the leaders of a group called “The Sons of Liberty,” which would work to fight the oppressive laws. Samuel's cousin John Adams wrote in his diary, “About this time I called upon my friend, Samuel Adams, and found him at his desk. He told me the town of Boston had employed him to draw instructions for their representatives; that he felt an ambition which was very apt to mislead a man; that of doing something extraordinary; and he wanted to consult a friend who might suggest some thoughts to his mind. I read his instructions, and showed him a copy of mine. I told him I thought his very well as far as they went, but he had not gone enough. Upon reading mine, he said he was of my opinion, and accordingly took into his some paragraphs from mine.” [8]

In 1768, even after the Parliament repealed the harsh economic measures known as the Townshend Acts, Adams felt that the British government continued its policy of disrespect to its colonies and the colonists. Historian Michael P. Kane wrote, “Adams wrote to Dennis DeBerdt, the [Massachusetts] colony's agent

in London. The letter outlined Parliament's attempt to control the colonial legislatures and deny colonists their natural rights as British subjects. For Adams and the Assembly, Parliament expressed disdain for the colonial temperament.” [9] Adams' letter appeared in *The Boston Gazette and Country Journal* for 4 April 1768. In the letter, Adams wrote:

Since the last sitting of the General Court, divers [various] Acts of Parliament relating to the Colonies have arrived here: And as the people of this Province had no share in the framing [of] those laws, in which they are so deeply interested, the House of Representatives [of the colony], who are constitutionally entrusted by them, as the guardians of their rights and liberties, have thought in their indispensable duty carefully to peruse them, and having so done, to point out such matters in them as appear which to be grievous to their constituents, & to seek redress. The fundamental rules of the constitution are the grand security of all British subjects, and it is a security which they are equally entitled to, in all parts of his Majesty's extended dominions. The supreme legislature in every free state derives its power from the constitution, by the fundamental rules of which it is bounded and circumscribed. As a legislative power is essentially requisite, where any powers of government are exercised, it is conceived, the several legislative bodies in America were erected, because their existence, and the free exercise of their power within their several limits, are essentially important and necessary, to preserve to his Majesty's subjects in America the advantages of the fundamental laws of the constitution. [10]

Adams served in the various offices he held until June 1774, when the Massachusetts General Court elected him and five other men—his cousin, John Adams, James Bowdoin (who ultimately declined the honor), John Hancock, Thomas Cushing, and Robert Treat Paine—as delegates to the new Continental Congress, a body formed among the colonies to draft articles in protest of the harsh economic measures instituted by the British Parliament. Traveling to Philadelphia, at that time the economic center of the colonies, Adams soon became one of the leaders of that body. Historian Matthew Secombe explained, “While the prestige of Massachusetts and the relative harmony in Congress were due mainly to this basis consensus [sic], clever

maneuvering played its part, and here Samuel Adams was at his best. Congress showed its colors at the start by assembling in Carpenters' Hall, a whig stronghold, and choosing as [its] secretary Charles Thomson, 'the Saml. Adams of Phyladelphia [sic].' Two congressmen struck a discordant note, however, when they claimed that the religious diversity of the members would prevent them from conducting common prayers. Combining a plea for unity with a favor for his Anglican southern friends, Adams rose and said that 'he was no Bigot, and could hear a Prayer from a Gentleman of Piety and Virtue, who was at the same Time a Friend to his Country.'" [11]

Adams and his fellow Massachusetts delegates were considered to be traitors to the Crown as soon as London heard of their selection to the Continental Congress. A letter that appeared in *The New-York Journal*, written by the Earl of Dunmore stated:

From unquestionable authority I learn, that about a fortnight ago, dispatches were sent from hence by a sloop of war to General [Thomas] Gage, containing, among other things, a royal Proclamation, declaring the inhabitants of Massachusetts Bay, and some others, in the different Colonies actual rebels; with a blank commission to try and execute such of them as he can get hold of; with this is sent a list of names, to be inserted in the commission as he made judge expedient. I do not know them all, but Messrs. Samuel Adams, John Adams, Robert Treat Payne [sic], and John Hancock, of Massachusetts Bay; John Dickenson, of Philadelphia; Peyton Randolph, of Virginia; and Henry Middletown, of South Carolina, are particularly named, with many others. This black list [sic], the General will, no doubt, keep to himself, and unfold it gradually, as he finds it convenient. [12]

Despite being on this deadly blacklist, Adams attended the Continental Congress from its earliest days. Adams wrote to his wife, Elizabeth (whom he called Betsy), from Philadelphia on 30 July 1775 to tell her about the goings-on in the body:

My dear Betsy[.]

As I have no doubt but the Congress will adjourn in a few days, perhaps tomorrow, I do not expect to have another opportunity of writing to you before I set off for New England. The arduous Business that has been before the Congress and the close Application of the

Members, added to the Necessity and Importance of their visiting their several Colonies and attending their respective Conventions, have induced them to make a Recess during the sultry Month of August. My Stay with you must be short, for I suppose the Congress will meet again early in September . . . [13]

Regarding the resolution that Adams mentions in this letter, historian Edmund Cody Burnett explains, "No record has been found showing in what connection this resolution was drawn up or whether it was ever actually proposed, but it is placed here as probably belonging to this period of protest and declaration." [14]

Although he was now considered a traitor to his "country," Adams seems to have also attracted some admirers in England. *The Hibernian Magazine*, a British publication, published in their edition of February 1776 a biography of Samuel Adams:

Samuel Adams, Esq. is a gentleman who has made a great figure in America, and who has take so active a part in all her disputes with the mother-country, that he was joined Mr. [John] Hancock, in being the only persons refused pardon on returning to their duty to the British administration, in the proclamation issued last summer by general [Thomas] Gage. He is a man of fortune, a native of New England, about fifty-four years of age, and early inbibed [with] a love for constitutional liberty, which love he carried to a degree of enthusiasm, that would out permit him to be a silent spectator of the disputes which arose first about the stamp act, and since on the tea. He took every opportunity to warn his countrymen of the dangers arising to their liberties; and however some may think the question problematical, yet he always acted from principle, if he is evening [sic] mistaken, he has a just claim to the title of an honest man." [15]

Adams appeared before the Continental Congress on 1 August 1776 to deliver an oration on the role of religion in daily life. The speech was so well received that it was printed in pamphlet form. Adams rose before his fellow delegates and said:

I would gladly have declin'd an honor to which I find myself unequal. I have not the Calmness and impartiality which the infinite importance of this occasion demands. I will out deny the Charge of

my Enemies that Resentment for the accumulated Injuries of our Country, and an Ardour for her Glory, riing [sic] to Enthusiasm, may deprive me of that accuracy of Judgment and expression which Men of cooler passions may possess. Let me beseech you to hear me with Caution; to examine without prejudice, and to correct the mistakes into which I may be hurried by my Zeal . . . [o]ur Fore-Fathers, consented to be subject to the Laws of Great-Britain. I will not at present dispute it nor mark our the limits and Conditions or their submission; but will it be denied that they contracted to pay obedience, and to be under the controul [sic] of Great Britain, because it appear'd to them most beneficial in their then present Circumstances and Situation? We, my Countrymen, have the same right to consult and provide for our happiness, which they had to promote theirs. If they had a view to posterity in their Contracts, it must have been to advance the felicity of their Descendents. If they err'd in their expectations and prospects, we can never be condemned for a Conduct which they would have recommended, had they foreseen our present condition. [16]

During the First Continental Congress, Adams served on a committee which, as his speech above illustrates, served to publish the documentation on the rights of all of the colonies and their inhabitants. At the same time, this committee also demanded of London, prior to the start of the shooting war that opened up into the American Revolution, that they have the same rights as British subjects as those people who lived in England. He wholeheartedly supported his colony when they passed the so-called “Suffolk Resolves,” a series of resolutions by the city of Boston and other towns in Suffolk County in Massachusetts, which called for total disobedience and opposition to the harsh economic measures enacted by the British Parliament against the colonies, particularly Massachusetts Bay. Adams was one of its supporters when it was introduced in the Continental Congress, to be passed as a “national” law. When fellow delegates Joseph Galloway of Pennsylvania introduced a resolution which would have conceded that colonial rights were to be superseded by the Parliament, Adams was one of the most outspoken in opposition.

When that First Continental Congress dissolved in October 1775—the hope was that London

would hear the colonists’ cries and respond to them, with no necessity for a second meeting—Adams returned home to Massachusetts, where he was elected as a delegate to the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, a colonial body that would work on issues exclusive to that Massachusetts Bay. He ultimately returned to Philadelphia for the Second Continental Congress, serving as a colonist and British subject until 4 July 1776, when the Declaration of Independence was signed, forever breaking the ties between London and the colonies. Adams was a signatory to that document, and he penned, to friends, a series of letters detailing his thoughts on the signing of this historic document. To Joseph Hawley, his fellow Continental Congress delegate from Massachusetts, he wrote, “The Congress has at length declared the Colonies free and independent States. Upon this I congratulate you, for I know your heart has long been set upon it. Much I am afraid has been lost by delaying to take this decisive Step. It is my opinion that if it had been done Nine months ago we might have been justified in the Sight of God and Man, three Months ago.” [17] To delegate Richard Henry Lee, from Virginia, he penned, “Our Declaration of Independency has given Vigor to the Spirit of the People. . . . [A] Plan for Confederation has been brot [sic] into Congress wich [sic] I hope will be speedily digested and made ready to be laid before the several States for their approbation. A Committee has now under Consideration the Business of foreign Alliance.” [18] Finally, to James Warren, he stated, “Our Declaration of Independence has already been attended with good Effects. It is fortunate beyond our Expectation to have the Voice of every Colony in favor of so important a Question.” [19]

Adams also seems to have escaped the clutches of British General Thomas Gage, with his “list” of traitors, who apparently crossed Adams and John Hancock off as he feared that their capture would ultimately result in bloodshed by civilians against British troops who occupied, at differing periods, Boston and New York. Gage also might have considered that he could possibly deal with Adams if the British needed a leader trusted by the colonists to speak to. Such a need never arose, however. In that Second Continental Congress, Adams served

on the Board of War and Ordinance, which oversaw the management and supply as well as other matters in the Continental Army. [20] He remained in the Second Continental Congress until 1781, when he refused additional terms and returned home to Massachusetts. Despite swearing off any further elective office, as soon as he returned home Adams was elected to a seat in the Massachusetts state Senate, and, in that body, he was elected as its president. In 1788, following the writing of a new Federal Constitution for the new national government, Adams served as a member of the Massachusetts state constitutional convention, which ultimately ratified the document. Under the new Constitution, national elections for the new US House of Representatives and US Senate were held that same year; Adams ran for a House seat, but lost to Fisher James, who later served in the US Senate. In 1789, however, Adams was elected as the lieutenant governor of Massachusetts, under Governor John Hancock, replacing Lieutenant Governor Benjamin Lincoln, who retired after one term. Adams served in the second position in state government until 1793, when Hancock died, and Adams served as the interim governor. The following year, he was elected to a term of his own, and he remained in office until January 1797, when he retired.

Samuel Adams died at his home in Boston on 2 October 1803, a little more than a week after his 79th birthday. He was laid to rest in a simple grave in Boston's famed Granary burial ground, not far in the same cemetery where the five victims of the Boston Massacre are laid to rest as well. His second wife, Elizabeth Welles Adams, survived him by five years. The *Boston Commercial Gazette* said of the deceased patriot, "[y]esterday morning, between the hours of 8 and 9, the Death of the Hon. Samuel Adams, Esq. late Governor of this Commonwealth, was announced to the inhabitants, by the toling of all the bells in town. Mr. Adams long a valetudinarian [defined as "a person unduly anxious about their health"]; [he] had experienced much of the indisposition and bodily pain, natural to the infirmity of age—He had reached his 82d year." [21] The *Charleston Courier* of South Carolina noted, "Mr. [John] Randolph [of Virginia], in his

introductory remarks to a resolution that the members of the House of Representatives of the United States should wear crape on the left arm for one month, in consequence of the decease of the late patriot, *Samuel Adams*, observed, that the latter 'made an early and decided stand against British encroachment, while souls *more timid*, were trimbling [sic] and irresolute.' From the attachment of *Mr. Randolph* to '*the greatest Man in America*,' there is no reason to conclude that any sarcasm was levelled at living patriots, in his remarks."

[22] In a eulogy, the *Republican Farmer* of Danbury, Connecticut, said, "He lived to see his enemies confounded, his political principles triumphant, and his most fervent wishes accomplished. His name and his virtue will be revered by a grateful posterity, when the ephemeral politicians of the present day, who have rudely assailed his character and his theory, shall be remembered only in the remembrance of their vices. His glory shall 'flourish in immortal youth,' when their ashes shall be scattered by the wind of Heaven, and their names shall have perished from the face of the Earth!" [23]

In addition to Samuel Adams being remembered because a best selling beer bears his name, he deserves attention for his career in politics, his service to his nation in time of peace and war, his writings, and his speeches. He is overshadowed by his much more famous cousin, John Adams, who rose to become president of the United States. Historian Pauline Maier wrote, "When John Adams reflected on how future historians would remember his cousin Samuel, he was filled with forebodings. Samuel Adams's character 'will never accurately be known to posterity,' he wrote, 'as it was never sufficiently known to its own age.' And on October 3, 1803, the day after Samuel Adams's death, a Salem clergyman confided very similar observations to his diary. Adams seemed to have 'an impenetrable secrecy,' the Reverend William Bentley claimed; he was 'feared by his enemies' yet remained 'too secret to be loved by his friends.'" [24]

[1] Simmons, George A., "Samuel Adams," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, I:1 (1877), 439.