



Letters From Abigail

With wisdom and faith, Abigail helped forge a nation.

by Lynne Patterson

What is the use of books, Abigail thought, if I am not allowed to learn to read?

Abigail Smith stood in front of her father's massive maple bookcases in their home in Weymouth, Massachusetts. Her brown eyes scanned row after row of books. Though tall and slender for her age, Abigail could not reach the top shelf even if she stood on her tiptoes.

Reverend Smith looked at his daughter fondly. She was clever, even though she had no formal education. At the

time, school in the American colonies was only for boys.

"Abigail," he said softly, "if you want to learn, your mother may use all my books to teach you."

Abigail blushed with excitement. "Oh, thank you, Father!"

Abigail's mother, Elizabeth, taught her to read and write. She also taught Abigail social graces, how to cook and sew, how to keep an orderly home and how to milk the cows.

As a teenager, Abigail always had her nose stuck in a

book. She studied politics and philosophy and taught herself how to speak French.

When a young lawyer came to visit, Abigail took him by surprise. He had never met a woman who knew so much! John lived in a different town, so they wrote each other letters; one he simply addressed to "Miss Adorable."

A month before her 20th birthday, after two years of courtship, Abigail married John Adams. Her father performed the ceremony.

Sound of Thunder

Ten years passed. Abigail could hear the sounds of men marching through the streets, the high-pitched tweet of the fife and the ratta-tat-tat of beating drums. All around Boston, church bells were clanging.

John was on the road to Philadelphia. But he worried for Abigail's safety. "In case of real danger," he wrote, "fly to the woods with our children."

Abigail wrote back boldly. "Courage I know we have, conduct I hope we shall not want, but [gun] powder—where shall we get a sufficient supply?"

That very night, Abigail was awakened by a sound like thunder. She dressed quickly and left the house with her eldest son, John Quincy, and three other children. They walked through the woods to the top of a hill.

Boston was covered by a blue haze. Bombs burst in the air and musket balls cracked and whizzed through the darkness.

"What does this mean, Mother?" John Quincy asked, his eyes full of tears.

Abigail trembled. A British ship had fired on the patriot troops massing on a nearby hill. As the early morning dawned on

June 17, 1775, the day would bring war to Boston.

The struggle for liberty was just beginning.

Trust in Him

A few days later, John Adams reached for the letter on his nightstand in Philadelphia. He read Abigail's description of the Battle of Bunker Hill.

John couldn't go home. The Continental Congress needed him. But his family needed him, too. Soldiers were hiding in their house and training in their yard. Abigail had even melted down the silverware to make ammunition.

Perhaps the price of freedom is too high a price to pay, John thought.

Suddenly, his eyes fell on a page from Abigail's letter. "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong," she wrote, quoting Ecclesiastes 9, "but the God of Israel is He that giveth strength and power unto His people. Trust in Him at all times, ye people pour out your hearts before Him. God is a refuge for us."

After reading Abigail's words, John gained strength—and the confidence to form a new nation.

John Adams became the second president of the United States, with Abigail as his first lady. John Quincy Adams, their son, would serve as the sixth president.

Throughout their marriage, Abigail encouraged John and pushed him to do his best. "Remember the ladies," she urged in one letter, "and be kinder to them than your ancestors."

The girl who couldn't read grew up to be an eloquent writer. Abigail and John wrote each other more than 1,100 letters. Their words speak of revolution, love and an unshakable faith in God's providence. 🍏



Enjoy one of Abigail's favorite desserts.

Gather

- 2 pounds apples (about 5 or 6)
- 2 tablespoons maple syrup
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- pinch of nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- ¾ cup flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- pinch of salt
- ½ cup sugar
- ½ cup butter, melted and cooled
- ½ cup whole milk
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 teaspoon raw sugar
- whipped cream

Go

1. Peel, quarter and core the apples, then thinly slice them into a bowl.
2. Add maple syrup, cinnamon and nutmeg. Toss to coat apple slices evenly.
3. Mix in lemon juice and toss again. Cover loosely and let apples sit at least 30 minutes but no more than 2 hours.
4. Preheat oven to 350° F degrees. Grease a 1-quart, ovenproof baking dish.
5. Spoon apple mixture into baking dish.
6. In a second bowl, sift flour, baking powder and salt. Stir in sugar.
7. Make a well in the center of the flour and add butter, milk and vanilla. Stir together.
8. Spread batter over the apples. Top with raw sugar (or any decorative, large-crystal sugar).
9. Carefully shake the dish or tap it against the counter to settle the contents.
10. Bake for 40 to 45 minutes until golden brown.
11. Let cool in the pan, then serve into warmed bowls. Top with whipped cream.