

**LETTERS BETWEEN ABIGAIL ADAMS
AND HER HUSBAND JOHN ADAMS**

MARCH 31, 1776

ABIGAIL ADAMS TO JOHN ADAMS

"I long to hear that you have declared an independency. And, by the way, in the new code of laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make, I desire you would remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors.

"Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the husbands.

"Remember, all men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation.

"That your sex are naturally tyrannical is a truth so thoroughly established as to admit of no dispute; but such of you as wish to be happy willingly give up -- the harsh tide of master for the more tender and endearing one of friend.

"Why, then, not put it out of the power of the vicious and the lawless to use us with cruelty and indignity with impunity?

"Men of sense in all ages abhor those customs which treat us only as the (servants) of your sex; regard us then as being placed by Providence under your protection, and in imitation of the Supreme Being make use of that power only for our happiness."

APRIL 14, 1776

JOHN ADAMS TO ABIGAIL ADAMS

"As to your extraordinary code of laws, I cannot but laugh.

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

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

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

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

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

MAY 7, 1776
ABIGAIL ADAMS TO JOHN ADAMS

"I cannot say that I think you are very generous to the ladies; for, whilst you are proclaiming peace and good-will to men, emancipating all nations, you insist upon retaining an absolute power over wives.

"But you must remember that arbitrary power is like most other things which are very hard, very liable to be broken; and, notwithstanding all your wise laws and maxims, we have it in our power, not only to free ourselves, but to subdue our masters, and without violence, throw both your natural and legal authority at our feet."



The right of women to vote was not recognized by the United States until 1920, more than 144 years after the Declaration of Independence. *And that's not because no one earlier had thought of it!*

- 1777 -- Women lose the right to vote in New York...**
- 1780 -- Women lose the right to vote in Massachusetts...**
- 1784 -- Women lose the right to vote in New Hampshire...**
- 1787 -- Women in all states except New Jersey lose the right to vote.**

On the night of April 26, 1777, Sybil Ludington, age 16, rode through towns in New York and Connecticut warning that the Redcoats were coming to Danbury, CT. She gathered enough volunteers to help beat back the British the next day. *Her ride was twice the distance of Paul Revere's.* Her hometown was renamed after her.

On June 28, 1778, while "attending the [artillery] piece" with her husband at the battle of Monmouth, N.J., a cannon shot passed between the legs of Mary Hays (Molly Pitcher) tearing off the lower part of her skirt -- and she kept on loading her cannon. When her husband was wounded, she either fired the cannon once alone or several times, depending on witnesses. In 1822, she was awarded a soldier's pension of \$40 a year.

In October of 1778 Deborah Samson of Plymouth Massachusetts disguised herself as a young man and presented herself to the American army as a willing volunteer to oppose the common enemy. She enlisted for the whole term of the war as Robert Shirliffe and served in the company of Captain Nathan Thayer of Medway, Massachusetts. For three years she served in various duties and was wounded twice -- the first time by a sword cut on the side of the head and four months later by a shot through the shoulder.

SOURCE: <http://www.thelizlibrary.org/suffrage/abigail.htm>