

John and Abigail Adams: The Original POWER COUPLE



The “power couple” might seem like a modern political concept, but today’s dynamic duos are heirs to the legacy of John and Abigail Adams. Both astute political observers, in 54 years of marriage, John and Abigail’s letters demonstrated passionate devotion to each other and to their country.

1774

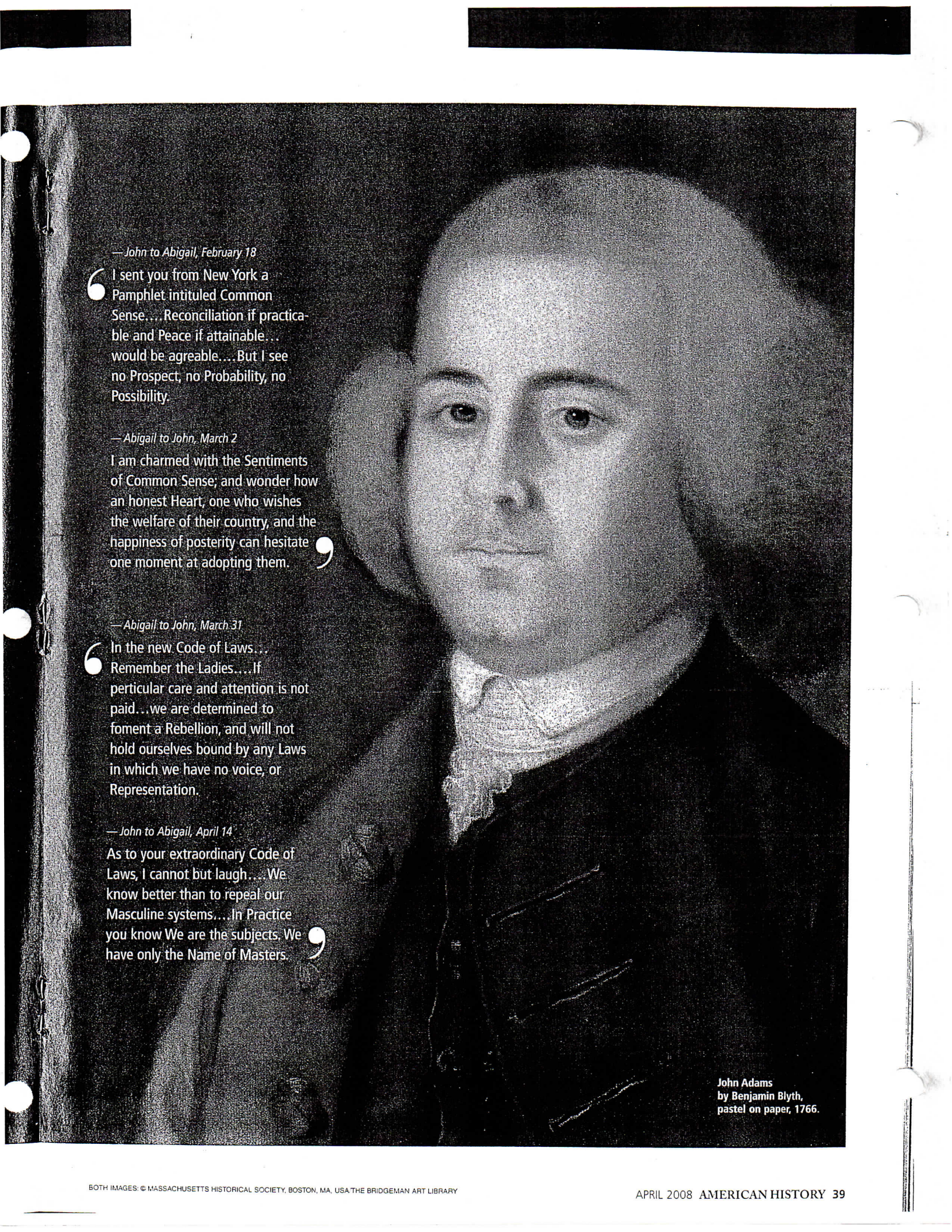
—Abigail to John, August 19, on the convening of the First Continental Congress

“I long impatiently to have you upon the Stage of action. The first of September...perhaps may be of as much importance to Great Britain as the Ides of March were to Caesar.

—John to Abigail, August 28

We are now within forty two Miles of Philadelphia.... Tomorrow We reach the Theatre of Action.... The Spirit of the People...seems to be very favourable. They universally consider our Cause as their own.”

Abigail Adams
by Benjamin Blyth,
pastel on paper, 1766.



— John to Abigail, February 18

I sent you from New York a Pamphlet intituled Common Sense... Reconciliation if practicable and Peace if attainable... would be agreeable... But I see no Prospect, no Probability, no Possibility.

— Abigail to John, March 2

I am charmed with the Sentiments of Common Sense; and wonder how an honest Heart, one who wishes the welfare of their country, and the happiness of posterity can hesitate one moment at adopting them.

— Abigail to John, March 31

In the new Code of Laws... Remember the Ladies... If particular care and attention is not paid... we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation.

— John to Abigail, April 14

As to your extraordinary Code of Laws, I cannot but laugh... We know better than to repeal our Masculine systems... In Practice you know We are the subjects. We have only the Name of Masters.

John Adams
by Benjamin Blyth,
pastel on paper, 1766.



Keenly aware that other Founding Fathers were often held in higher esteem, John chafed at the secondary role he believed history had in store for him. Abigail, however, never wavered in her support of John, even when their public life ended in a bitter feud with their longtime friend Thomas Jefferson.

1796

— John to Abigail, January 20,
on the first presidential election
after George Washington

“ I am Heir Apparent you know and a Succession is soon to take Place. But whatever may be the Wish or the Judgment of the present Occupant... I have a pious and a philosophical Resignation to the Voice of the People in this Case which is the Voice of God.

— Abigail to John, February 15

In my opinion there is no more danger in the Change than there would be in changing a Member of the Senate.... If [you] should be passed over... the Government will go on as well as ever.... The Heir apparent... retires without Noise, or Cries or Tears to his farm. ”

Abigail Adams
by Gilbert Stuart, oil on
canvas, circa 1800.

1797

— John to Abigail, March 9, on his inauguration as the second U.S. president

“It is the general Report that there was more Weeping than...at the Representation of any Tragedy. But whether it was from Grief or Joy, whether from the Loss of their President, or from the Accession of an unbeloved one, or from the Pleasure of exchanging Presidents without Tumult or from the Novelty of the Thing...I know not.

— Abigail to John, March 25

The solemnity of the Scene...the dignified Speech deliverd previous to the oath of office, the presence of the Great Friend and Father of his Country who presented himself to the publick as a pledge for his Successor, could not fail to inspire into the mind and Hearts of all present, the strongest Emotions of tenderness, nor do I wonder that it found its way to their Eyes.”

1801

— John to Abigail, February 16, on learning that Thomas Jefferson was declared the winner of the extremely bitter 1800 presidential contest

“The Election will be decided this day in favour of Mr. Jefferson.

— Abigail to John, February 19

I wish the Gentleman much joy and happiness with his *Bride*. I fear she will prove a very vixen to him.”



John Adams
by George P.A. Healy,
oil on canvas, 1860.
Copied from Gilbert Stuart,
circa 1800.