



# **Dear Abigail: The Intimate Lives and Revolutionary Ideas of Abigail Adams and Her Two Remarkable Sisters**

*Diane Jacobs*

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**For readers of the historical works of Robert K. Massie, David McCulough, and Alison Weir comes the first biography on the life of Abigail Adams and her sisters.**

*“Never sisters loved each other better than we.”—Abigail Adams in a letter to her sister Mary, June 1776*

Much has been written about the enduring marriage of President John Adams and his wife, Abigail. But few know of the equally strong bond Abigail shared with her sisters, Mary Cranch and Elizabeth Shaw Peabody, accomplished women in their own right. Now acclaimed biographer Diane Jacobs reveals their moving story, which unfolds against the stunning backdrop of America in its transformative colonial years.

Abigail, Mary, and Elizabeth Smith grew up in Weymouth, Massachusetts, the close-knit daughters of a minister and his wife. When the sisters moved away from one another, they relied on near-constant letters—from what John Adams called their “elegant pen”—to buoy them through pregnancies, illnesses, grief, political upheaval, and, for Abigail, life in the White House. Infusing her writing with rich historical perspective and detail, Jacobs offers fascinating insight into these progressive women’s lives: oldest sister Mary, who became de facto mayor of her small village; youngest sister Betsy, an aspiring writer who, along with her husband, founded the second coeducational school in the United States; and middle child Abigail, who years before becoming First Lady ran the family farm while her husband served in the Continental Congress, first in Philadelphia, and was then sent to France and England, where she joined him at last.

This engaging narrative traces the sisters’ lives from their childhood sibling rivalries to their eyewitness roles during the American Revolution and their adulthood as outspoken wives and mothers. They were women ahead of their time who believed in intellectual and educational equality between the sexes. Drawing from newly discovered correspondence, never-before-published diaries, and archival research, *Dear Abigail* is a fascinating front-row seat to history—and to the lives of three exceptional women who were influential during a time when our nation’s democracy was just taking hold.

## **Advance praise for *Dear Abigail***

“In a beautifully wrought narrative, Diane Jacobs has brought the high-spirited, hyperarticulate Smith sisters, and the early years of the American republic, to rich, luminous life. . . . A stunning, sensitive work of history.”—**Stacy Schiff, Pulitzer Prize–winning author of *Cleopatra***

“Jacobs is a superb storyteller. In this sweeping narrative about family and friendship during the American Revolution, Abigail Adams emerges as one of the great political heroines of the eighteenth century. I fell in love with her all over again.”—**Amanda Foreman, *New York Times* bestselling author of *A World on Fire***

“Beauty, brains, and breeding—Elizabeth, Abigail, and Mary had them all. This absorbing history shows how these close-knit and well-educated daughters of colonial America become women of influence in the newly begotten United States. Jacobs’s feel for the period is confident; so is her appreciation of the nuances

of character.”—**Daniel Mark Epstein, author of *The Lincolns: Portrait of a Marriage***

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