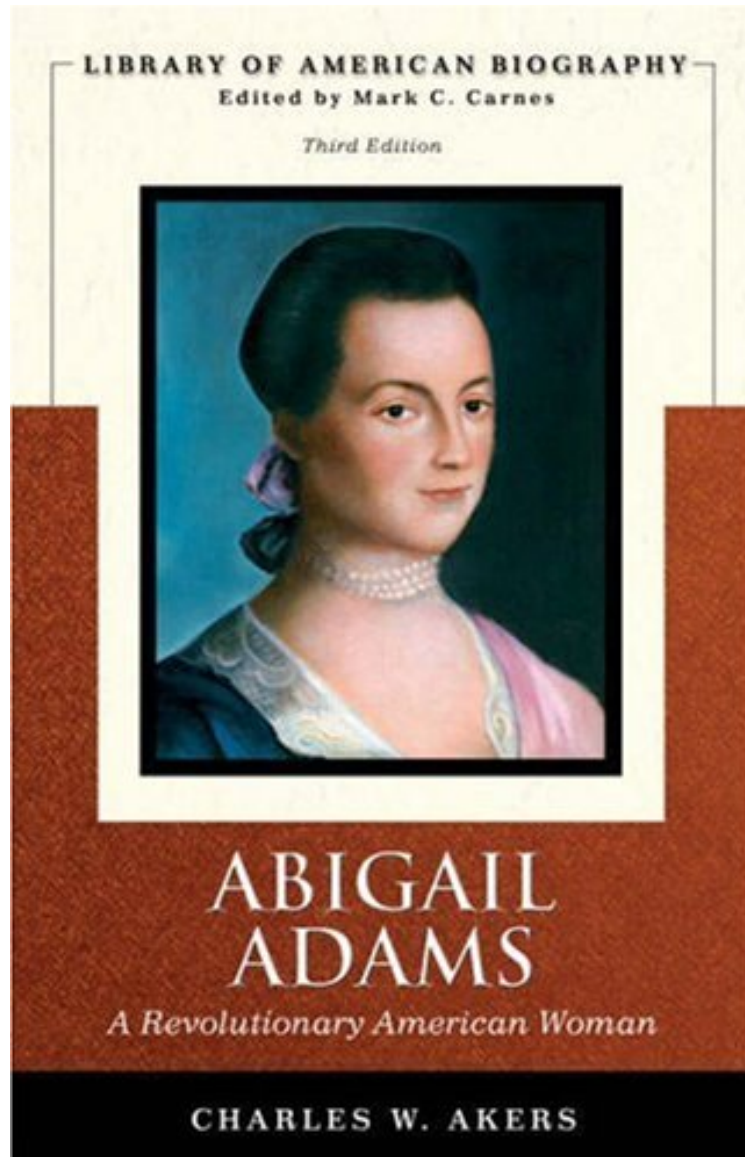


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Abigail Adams: A Revolutionary American Woman (Library of American Biography Series) (3rd Edition)

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About the Author Charles W. Akers is professor emeritus of history at Oakland University. In addition to *Abigail Adams: An American Woman*, he has also published *Divine Politician: Samuel Cooper and the American Revolution in Boston* and *Bo McMillin: Man and Legend* (with John W. Carter).

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Editor's Preface The Europeans who crossed the Atlantic brought with them conventions about family life that endured long after their migration. Their children inherited beliefs and practices that defined the roles appropriate to each member; a network of communal institutions reinforced the pressures that induced each to play the assigned part. Religion, education, and the law sustained the expectations of what a father, a mother, a husband, a wife, and children should be and do. In 1776 the family of the New World was, in many ways, what it had been in the Old. Yet the circumstances of life in a wilderness generated subtle forces of change. Though Massachusetts was several generations away from the frontier, it was more remote still from London and had developed in a fashion of its own, so that husbands, wives, and children in that province stood toward one another in a relationship not precisely the same as that in England. Abigail Adams in her life exemplified what it meant to be a woman, an American, and a revolutionary of the transitional period between colonial status and independence. Her aspirations were not precisely the same as those either of her seventeenth-century ancestors or of nineteenth- and twentieth-century descendants. The role she defined for herself as a woman was that of a wife, but a role entirely the equal of her husband's not the same but equal. As an American she discovered the uniqueness of her nation's ideas, conventions, and habits of behavior by contrast with those of the women of London and Paris. And as participant in the Revolution she explored the meaning of the ways in which the new woman of the New World would stand beside its new man. Articulate and introspective, she recorded in detail the exciting incidents that crowded her long life. Her records provided the materials for this book. Professor Akers was fortunate in his choice of a subject; Abigail Adams was fortunate in a biographer whose sensitive account brings her to life. Oscar Handlin