

Dictionary of Literary Biography

Volume 31:

American
Colonial Writers,
1735-1781

Dictionary of Literary Biography • Volume Thirty-one

American Colonial Writers, 1735-1781

Edited by
Emory Elliott
Princeton University

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Plan of the Series

. . . *Almost the most prodigious asset of a country, and perhaps its most precious possession, is its native literary product—when that product is fine and noble and enduring.*

Mark Twain*

The advisory board, the editors, and the publisher of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* are joined in endorsing Mark Twain's declaration. The literature of a nation provides an inexhaustible resource of permanent worth. It is our expectation that this endeavor will make literature and its creators better understood and more accessible to students and the literate public, while satisfying the standards of teachers and scholars.

To meet these requirements, *literary biography* has been construed in terms of the author's achievement. The most important thing about a writer is his writing. Accordingly, the entries in *DLB* are career biographies, tracing the development of the author's canon and the evolution of his reputation.

The publication plan for *DLB* resulted from two years of preparation. The project was proposed to Brucoli Clark by Frederick G. Ruffner, president of the Gale Research Company, in November 1975. After specimen entries were prepared and typeset, an advisory board was formed to refine the entry format and develop the series rationale. In meetings held during 1976, the publisher, series editors, and advisory board approved the scheme for a comprehensive biographical dictionary of persons who contributed to North American literature. Editorial work on the first volume began in January 1977, and it was published in 1978.

In order to make *DLB* more than a reference tool and to compile volumes that individually have claim to status as literary history, it was decided to organize volumes by topic or period or genre. Each of these freestanding volumes provides a biographical-bibliographical guide and overview for a particular area of literature. We are convinced that this organization—as opposed to a single alphabet method—constitutes a valuable innovation in the presentation of reference material. The volume plan necessarily requires many decisions for the

placement and treatment of authors who might properly be included in two or three volumes. In some instances a major figure will be included in separate volumes, but with different entries emphasizing the aspect of his career appropriate to each volume. Ernest Hemingway, for example, is represented in *American Writers in Paris, 1920-1939* by an entry focusing on his expatriate apprenticeship; he is also in *American Novelists, 1910-1945* with an entry surveying his entire career. Each volume includes a cumulative index of subject authors. The final *DLB* volume will be a comprehensive index to the entire series.

With volume ten in 1982 it was decided to enlarge the scope of *DLB* beyond the literature of the United States. By the end of 1983 twelve volumes treating British literature had been published, and volumes for Commonwealth and Modern European literature were in progress. The series has been further augmented by the *DLB Yearbooks* (since 1981) which update published entries and add new entries to keep the *DLB* current with contemporary activity. There have also been occasional *DLB Documentary Series* volumes which provide biographical and critical background source materials for figures whose work is judged to have particular interest for students. One of these companion volumes is entirely devoted to Tennessee Williams.

The purpose of *DLB* is not only to provide reliable information in a convenient format but also to place the figures in the larger perspective of literary history and to offer appraisals of their accomplishments by qualified scholars.

We define literature as the *intellectual commerce of a nation*: not merely as belles lettres, but as that ample and complex process by which ideas are generated, shaped, and transmitted. *DLB* entries are not limited to "creative writers" but extend to other figures who in this time and in this way influenced the mind of a people. Thus the series encompasses historians, journalists, publishers, and screenwriters. By this means readers of *DLB* may be aided to perceive literature not as cult scripture in the keeping of cultural high priests, but as at the center of a nation's life.

DLB includes the major writers appropriate to each volume and those standing in the ranks immediately behind them. Scholarly and critical counsel has been sought in deciding which minor figures to include and how full their entries should be.

*From an unpublished section of Mark Twain's autobiography, copyright © by the Mark Twain Company.

Wherever possible, useful references will be made to figures who do not warrant separate entries.

Each *DLB* volume has a volume editor responsible for planning the volume, selecting the figures for inclusion, and assigning the entries. Volume editors are also responsible for preparing, where appropriate, appendices surveying the major periodicals and literary and intellectual movements for their volumes, as well as lists of further readings. Work on the series as a whole is coordinated at the Brucoli Clark editorial center in Columbia, South Carolina, where the editorial staff is responsible for the accuracy of the published volumes.

One feature that distinguishes *DLB* is the illustration policy—its concern with the iconography of literature. Just as an author is influenced by his surroundings, so is the reader's understanding of the author enhanced by a knowledge of his environment. Therefore *DLB* volumes include not only drawings, paintings, and photographs of authors, often depicting them at various stages in their careers, but also illustrations of their families and places where they lived. Title pages are regularly reproduced in facsimile along with dust jackets for modern authors. The dust jackets are a special fea-

ture of *DLB* because they often document better than anything else the way in which an author's work was launched in its own time. Specimens of the writers' manuscripts are included when feasible.

A supplement to *DLB*—tentatively titled *A Guide, Chronology, and Glossary for American Literature*—will outline the history of literature in North America and trace the influences that shaped it. This volume will provide a framework for the study of American literature by means of chronological tables, literary affiliation charts, glossarial entries, and concise surveys of the major movements. It has been planned to stand on its own as a vade mecum, providing a ready-reference guide to the study of American literature as well as a companion to the *DLB* volumes for American literature.

Samuel Johnson rightly decreed that "The chief glory of every people arises from its authors." The purpose of the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* is to compile literary history in the surest way available to us—by accurate and comprehensive treatment of the lives and work of those who contributed to it.

The *DLB* Advisory Board

Foreword

The Glorious Revolution in England in 1688-1689 marks a significant turning point in the development of American culture. Before that event the thought and writing of those living in the New World, and in New England in particular, had begun to develop in ways that were increasingly autonomous and, from an English contemporary's viewpoint, rather peculiar. Throughout the seventeenth century the political turmoil in England and the often shrewd diplomacy of the New Englanders provided many of the northern colonists with the opportunity to develop in their writings religious ideas, political structures, and an early form of national pride, which is expressed in such a work as Cotton Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702). Even in the southern colonies, where the ties to the Church of England and the Crown remained strong, conditions of life in the New World—the land, the natives, the distance from Europe—led to variations in taste, forms of expression, and culture that give Ebenezer Cook's *The Sot-Weed Factor* (1708) and William Byrd's *The Secret History of the Line* (written circa 1730) their particular character. By 1690 in New England the literary expression found in the Puritan jeremiad, the spiritual autobiography, and the spiritualized histories and biographies could be distinguished as having the potential for forming the foundation of a distinctive American literary tradition—a tradition that was emerging in the southern and middle colonies by the end of the century as well.

The establishment of a new, stable government in England in the 1690s, however, had a profound and lasting impact upon intellectual and cultural life in America. What Perry Miller indicated about New England in the subtitle for the second volume of his *The New England Mind* is true of all the colonies: America was transformed “from Colony to Province.” Great Britain's heightened awareness of the importance of the American colonies and the increased political control that followed served to transform the colonies from a set of relatively separate entities to a subculture of Europe. Just as the increasingly watchful eyes of European governments affected the political, military, and economic activities of the colonists, so did the influential opinions of the European arbiters of literary and artistic taste set the standards and establish the forms for literature and the arts. Of course, the seventeenth-century American poets

such as Anne Bradstreet and Edward Taylor had been influenced by European writers such as Donne, DuBartus, and Quarles, as well as by Shakespeare and Milton; but the Puritan writers of the seventeenth century felt neither the desire nor the obligation to imitate European models, as did the preacher-poet Mather Byles with Pope in the 1740s and American prose writers with Addison and Steele throughout the eighteenth century. As English and Scottish philosophers, critics, and men of letters elaborated the criteria for taste in literature and the arts in the eighteenth century, the American provincials strove to adhere to these standards and emulate their European betters.

As a result of these historical events, American literature really has two beginnings: one established in the austere rhetoric and sacred imagery of the sermon and the personal narrative of New England; another fostered by Enlightenment thought and neoclassical principles. While the blending of these two heritages would ultimately provide rich verbal and imaginative resources for later American writers, the situation presents the student of eighteenth-century American literature with complex questions of influences and continuities. For example, because of the powerful impact of preachers such as Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield during the religious revivals of the Great Awakening in the 1740s, the imagery, myths, and verbal structures of the Puritan sermon remained vital elements of American writing. The sermon continued to be the most important literary form throughout the century. Thousands in the middle and southern colonies as well as in New England learned the rhetoric of sin and salvation, of personal calling and communal mission. By the 1770s and 1780s, the vision of sacred destiny depicted in the Puritan idiom became part of the political tracts and speeches of the American Revolution, present even in the works of such a rationalist as Thomas Paine.

At the same time, by the 1740s and 1750s the classics and the works of Scottish and English writers were widely available. An increasing number of American bards, among them even Congregational ministers, experimented with heroic couplets, sonnets, and odes. At the head of this new tradition in American literature stands Benjamin Franklin. With his graceful style and wit, Franklin typified the cosmopolitan ideal in both his life and his writing. Beginning in the 1760s, the colleges in America

instituted major curriculum reforms, introducing the classics along with the critical and philosophical works of contemporary European thinkers, especially those of the Scottish Commonsense School of thought. So important were these figures of the European Enlightenment to American literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that this volume includes an appendix to present a review of the lives, works, and influence of the most important English and Scottish philosophers of the age.

These two heritages—New England Puritan and self-consciously American on the one hand; European Enlightenment and imitative on the other—initially stood in sharp contrast, as different as Cotton Mather from Benjamin Franklin. Throughout the century, however, there occurred a gradual and subtle blending of religious and classical elements, so that by the 1770s and 1780s young men such as Philip Freneau and Joel Barlow created nationalistic epics and satires that are neoclassical in form, but echo the Puritans in content and imagery. What precedes this aesthetic resolution, however, are four decades of literary history that continue to challenge the scholar who seeks to understand the

complex intellectual and literary conditions in the mid-eighteenth century and the relationship of this period to the development of American literature and culture as a whole.

Fortunately, during the last two or three decades, significant scholarly contributions have served to increase our knowledge both of the lives and works of many early writers and of the processes whereby the elements of seventeenth-century American culture were transformed and transmitted through the thought and writing of the eighteenth century to the generation of the Revolution and beyond. Questions of continuity, influences, and American uniqueness, or lack thereof, have been foremost in much of the most important work done in this field. Though there are many distinguished scholars who have contributed to this effort, I have dedicated this volume to six scholars whose work I have found to be of greatest importance in furthering our understanding of the literature and the significance of this period of our literary heritage.

—Emory Elliott

Acknowledgments

This book was produced by BC Research. Karen L. Rood, senior editor for the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* series, was the in-house editor.

Art supervisor is Claudia Ericson. Copyediting supervisor is Joycelyn R. Smith. Typesetting supervisor is Laura Ingram. The production staff includes Mary Betts, Rowena Betts, Kimberly Casey, Patricia Coate, Mary Page Elliott, Lynn Felder, Kathleen M. Flanagan, Joyce Fowler, Angelika Kourelis, and Patricia C. Sharpe. Jean W. Ross is permissions editor. Joseph Caldwell, photography editor, did photographic copy work for the volume.

A project of this magnitude is necessarily the work of many hands, and for such a book to be also of consistent high quality requires the commitment of hearts and minds as well. Credit should go to the contributors who patiently and cheerfully endured too many impersonal form letters from me during our two years of work together. To each of you, a hearty thanks for your goodwill and fine work.

While we would not have this volume without the collective commitment of the contributors, the book certainly would never have seen print without the splendid individual performance of our editor at BC Research, Ms. Karen Rood. Ms. Rood's superb editing skills, her unwavering professionalism, and her genuine scholarly interest in the material were exemplary throughout; she is indeed a person of exceptional talents, and I have been most fortunate to be able to work with her.

Closer to home, I have been able again to count upon the assistance of the mainstay of the

Princeton American Studies Program, Mrs. Helen Wright. Aiding me as she has American studies faculty since 1946, Helen helped to organize the complicated assignments for this volume of the *DLB*, and she typed and helped to mail those form letters. During the copyediting stage I received considerable assistance from my research assistant, Ms. Susan Mizruchi, who proved to be a remarkably capable editor as well as the most promising scholar I already knew her to be. Also assisting with final details and in searching for materials for reproduction in the volume has been another graduate student in the Princeton English department, Ms. Elizabeth Dant.

The skillful aid of the reference staff at the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University was essential in providing illustrations for this book. Director Norman Fiering, bibliographer Everett Wilkie, and reference librarian Susan L. Newbury have earned my gratitude.

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Dictionary of Literary Biography • Volume Thirty-one

American Colonial Writers, 1735-1781

Dictionary of Literary Biography

John Adams

Steven E. Kagle
Illinois State University

BIRTH: Braintree, Massachusetts, 30 October 1734, to John and Susanna Boylston Adams.

EDUCATION: B.A., Harvard College, 1755; studied law under James Putnam, 1756-1758.

MARRIAGE: 25 October 1764 to Abigail Smith; children: Abigail, John Quincy, Susanna, Charles, Thomas Bolyston.

DEATH: Quincy, Massachusetts, 4 July 1826.

SELECTED BOOKS: *Thoughts on Government: Applicable to the Present State of the American Colonies* (Philadelphia: Printed by John Dunlap, 1776);

Observations on the Commerce of the American States with Europe and the West Indies; Including the Several Articles of Import and Export. Also, An Essay on Canon and Feudal Law . . . (Philadelphia: Printed & sold by Robert Bell, 1783);

History of a Dispute with America, from its Origins in 1754. Written in 1774 (London: Printed for J. Stockdale, 1784); enlarged edition, in *Novanglus, and Massachusettensis; or, Political Essays, Published in the Years 1774 and 1775, On the Principle Points of Controversy, Between Great Britain and Her Colonies . . .*, by Adams, as Novanglus, and David Leonard, as Massachusettensis (Boston: Printed & published by Hews & Goss, 1819);

A Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America, volume 1 (London: Printed for C. Dilly, 1787; Philadelphia: Printed for Hall & Sellers, J. Cruikshank, and Young & M'Colloch, 1787; New York: Printed

& sold by H. Gaine, 1787); volumes 2-3 (London: Printed for C. Dilly & J. Stockdale, 1787-1788); volumes 1-3 (Philadelphia: Printed by Budd & Bartram for William Cobbett, 1797);

Discourses on Davila. A Series of Papers, on Political History: Written in the Year 1790, and then published in the Gazette of the United States (Boston: Printed by Russell & Cutler, 1805);

Diary of John Adams and Autobiography in volumes 2 and 3 of *The Works of John Adams*, edited by Charles Francis Adams (Boston: Little, Brown, 1850-1851);

The Earliest Diary of John Adams, edited by L. H. Butterfield, Wendell D. Garrett, and Marc Friedlander (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966).

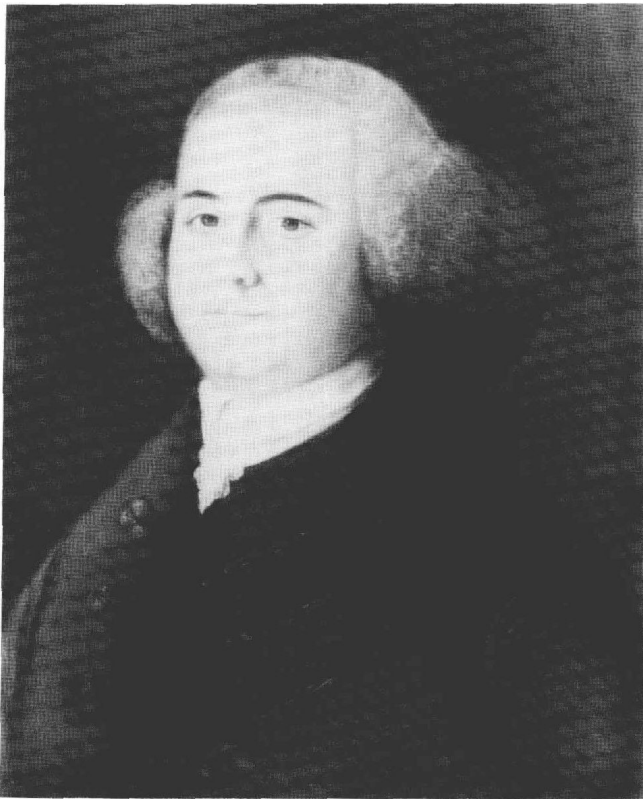
Collections: *The Works of John Adams*, 10 volumes, edited by Charles Francis Adams (Boston: Little, Brown, 1850-1856);

The Adams Papers, 26 volumes to date (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1961-);

Legal Papers of John Adams, edited by L. Kinvin Wroth and Hillier B. Zobel (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1965).

OTHER: *A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law*, by Adams, but attributed to Jeremy Gridley, in *The True Sentiments of America*, compiled by Thomas Hollis (London: Printed for I. Almon, 1768), pp. 111-143.

John Adams is still far less celebrated than many of his contemporaries, such as Washington, Jefferson, and Franklin, but after a long period of



John and Abigail Adams, August 1766; pastel portraits by Benjamin Blyth (Massachusetts Historical Society)

relative neglect he has regained a highly respected place in American history. Most of Adams's popular reputation is the result of his political activities and public offices, including his role in the first Continental Congresses and his election to the vice-presidency and presidency; however, his importance as a writer and political thinker, which was eclipsed along with his political fortunes during the early-nineteenth century, has now been securely established.

John Adams was born in Braintree, Massachusetts, where his paternal great-great-grandfather Henry Adams had settled in 1639. John's mother, Susanna Boylston, was descended from the Pilgrims who settled at Plymouth in 1621. His father, also named John, was a prosperous farmer, a town selectman, and a church deacon. This Puritan ancestry is observable in the strong emphasis on high morals, active learning, and hard work that mark most of Adam's life and writings.

John was first taught at home, next at a school run by a neighbor, Mrs. Belcher, and then at a local public school taught by Mr. Joseph Cleverly, whom Adams once called "the most indolent man I ever knew." Here the young Adams turned away from

the pursuit of excellence that would be such a marked feature of his character, not only because of his "Enthusiasm for Sport" (particularly hunting), but also because his lazy and inattentive teacher failed to provide a challenging pace of study. Adams's behavior so alarmed his father, who had determined that his eldest son should go to college, that he set his son to work beside him gathering thatch in order to teach him that the professions open to an educated man were preferable to farming; however, John, who throughout his life thrived on hard work, was happier "among the Creek Thatch" than at Cleverly's school. Finally, Adams agreed to prepare for college if his father would send him to a school run by Mr. Marsh. Here Adams's zeal for hunting was replaced by zeal for learning, and in 1751 he was admitted to Harvard College.

At Harvard Adams began a series of notes and weather records that soon developed into a diary that would span more than fifty years, during a large portion of which time its author would be close to many of the most important events in American history. There were long and significant periods in which Adams neglected his diary, but for much of

the time he wrote regular and extensive entries that give an effective portrait of the diarist and his time. This diary has value not only as a source of information about the life of a major historical figure, but also as a work of intrinsic merit. Indeed, it is also one of the finest diaries written in colonial America.

Adams considered improvement of his style to be one of the principal uses of the diary. In the eighteenth century the imitation of models was considered an effective way of developing one's prose style; for example, Franklin in his *Autobiography* told of imitating the *Spectator Papers*, and Adams's early diary entries show their author's attempts to learn not only from classical and contemporary European models, but also from the best American practices. Adams's diary shows his development of the balanced, rhythmic prose style so valued by writers and critics in the eighteenth century. The forceful expressions and commonplace examples that enliven the work are traceable to the "plaine style" of the Puritans. Adams had a good ear for dialogue, which helped him in characterization; and while by modern standards many of the figures he describes seem too much like stereotypes, Adams was really following forms such as the "prose character" widely used in writing of the period.

As with many diarists, Adams proved his own best character. Just as he could be forceful in his condemnation and satire of others, so he often subjected his own behavior to stern criticism. In addition Adams frequently betrayed truths about his character and its development of which he was, at best, only partially aware. The diary has a clear thematic direction determined by Adams's strong need to achieve. The pattern of its production as well as its content suggest that Adams used the work as a tool to serve his ambition, directing him toward greater and more effective actions. During periods which called for major effort, this diary keeping lapsed. Modeling himself after the hero of one of his favorite fables who chose the steep and difficult path of righteousness over that of vice, Adams would berate himself for what he called idleness and determine to begin some "uncommon unexpected Enterprize" that would surprise the world. Of course, for such sacrifices Adams expected "fame, fortune or something" in exchange. The display of such ambition in the diary invites comparison with the pursuit of excellence and virtue which Benjamin Franklin described in his *Autobiography*; however, while Franklin made himself appear modest, disarming his readers with an admission of vanity, Adams in his diary made himself seem prideful, full of high expectations for himself and scornful of the

follies of others. As a result, the diary is less than successful at winning its readers' endorsement of Adams's achievements. Nevertheless, Adams's accomplishments were significant, and the creation of the diary was a major one. Adams's diary is also the earliest part of the most extensive and important multigenerational autobiographical record of any American family, as Adams's practice was passed on to his children and grandchildren.

After graduating with a bachelor's degree in 1755, Adams taught school and, from 1756 to 1758, studied law with James Putnam. In 1761, the young lawyer accompanied a friend, William Cranch, on his visits to see Mary, the eldest daughter of Reverend Smith of Weymouth. These visits led to Adams's courtship of and marriage to Mary's sister Abigail in 1764. During this courtship Adams and Abigail Smith began a correspondence that has been frequently published and cited. The early letters were highly stylized. John, adopting the pseudonym Lysander, and Abigail, the pseudonym Diana, wrote of romantic dreams, and casual banter often covered more serious concerns as when Abigail wrote requesting a "catalogue" of her faults and John proceeded to complain of such things as her walk, posture, and bashfulness. Letters written during long separations after the marriage provide insights into the events and individuals that led to the birth of the American nation. For example, in one letter Adams complained of the Continental Congress, "Every Man in it is a great Man—an orator, a Critick, a statesman, and therefore every Man upon every Question must shew his oratory, his Criticism and his Political Abilities."

Adams became active in political controversies following the imposition of the Stamp Act in 1765. His essays (later titled *A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law* when Thomas Hollis included them in *The True Sentiments of America*, 1768) were published in the *Boston Gazette*, where two years earlier he had published some humorous pieces under the name Humphrey Ploughjogger. *A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law*, which was also published with Adams's *Observations on the Commerce of the American States with Europe and the West Indies* in 1783, argued the existence of a largely unwritten British constitution, which superseded the tyrannical and outdated civil and ecclesiastical law of the Middle Ages. Adams, like Jonathan Mayhew, used New England's Puritan rejection of "unlimited submission to a monolithic church hierarchy" to attack the claim of the British political establishment to total authority over the colonies. The same year Adams drafted and on October 14th published in the *Boston*

Harvard College June 8th 1753

Friday, at College, a cloudy, dull morning, and so continued till about 5 o'clock, when it began to rain moderately but continued not long, but remained gloomy all day which night matched with Powers.

Saturday, at College, the weather still remaining cloudy all day till 6 o'clock, when the clouds were dissipated, and the sun broke forth in all his glory.

Sunday, at College, a clear morning. Heard Mr. Appleton expound those words in 1. Cor. 12. Chap. 7. first verses, and in the afternoon heard him preach from those words in 26 of Matthew 41 verse, watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.

Monday, at College, a fair morning, and pretty warm till about 2 o'clock, there appeared some symptoms of an approaching storm, attended with some thunder. In afternoon, at College, a cloudy morning, heard Dr. Wigglesworth preach from the 20th chapter of Exodus 8, 9, & 10th verses.

Tuesday, at College, a cloudy morning, about 10 o'clock the sun shone out very warm, but about 12 the heat was, in part, abated by the rising of the wind.

Wednesday, at College, a clear, warm, morning but about 2 o'clock came up a very hard shower, accompanied with some thunder & lightning.

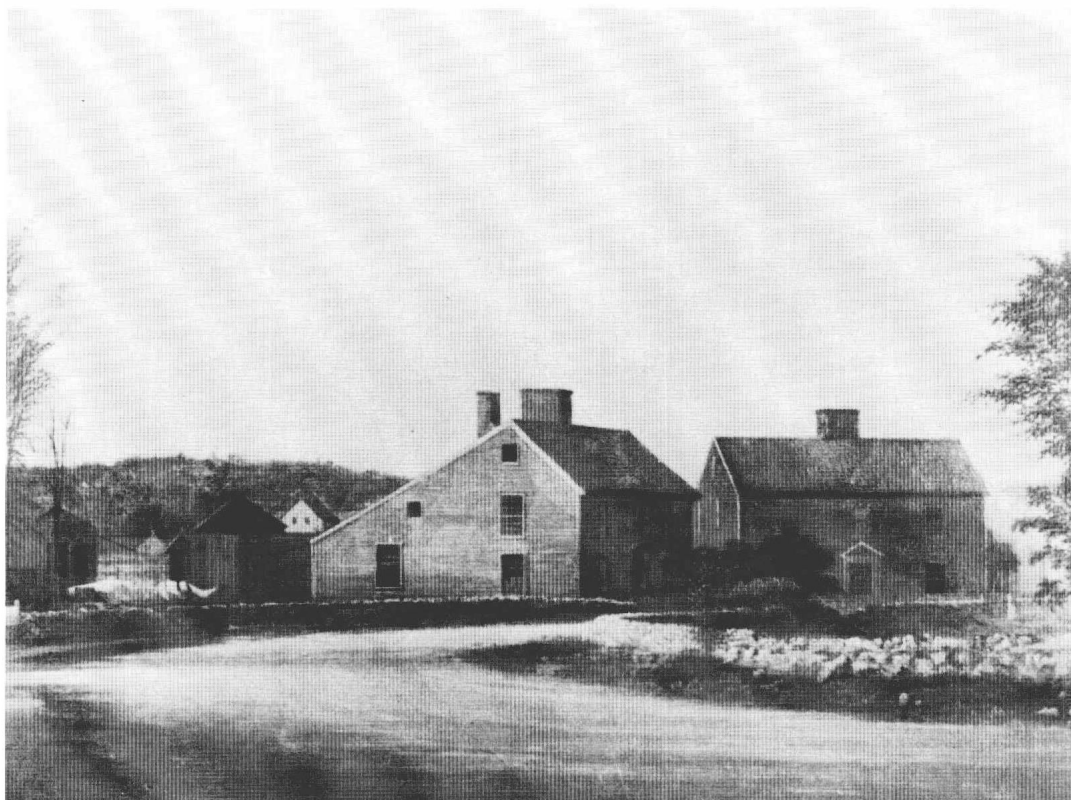
Thursday, at College, a clear warm morning, & so continued.

Friday, at College, a fair morning, but not very warm.

Saturday, at College, a fine morning, heard Mr. Appleton expound those words in 1. Cor. 12. Chap. 7. first verses, in the afternoon heard him preach from the first Psalm, and first verse.

Sunday, at College, a warm morning, at 11 o'clock read Theses on this question, viz) antheum et siphonum phaenomena solvantur ex gravitate aeris.

First page of Adams's first diary (courtesy of Royall Tyler Collection at the Vermont Historical Society)



An 1849 painting by Frankenstein of the Adams family farm in Braintree. John Adams was born in the house on the right; after their marriage, he and Abigail Adams lived in the house on the left, where John Quincy Adams was born (Adams National Historic Site).

Gazette the “Instructions of the Town of Braintree to their Representative,” which insisted that “no freeman should be subject to any tax to which he has not given his own consent.” On 13 January 1866 Adams published the first of a series of letters under the name Clarendon. These letters, written in reply to others and signed with the name Pym, had been reprinted two months earlier in the *Boston Evening Post* from material that had originally appeared in the *London Evening Post*. Adams argued that the British constitution limited the king’s power. While these pieces gained him some recognition, they did not lead to political office as Adams hoped.

Adams withdrew from active politics until 1770 when he agreed to join Josiah Quincy in defending the soldiers involved in the Boston Massacre. Although he opposed the stationing of these British troops in Boston, Adams could not condone mob action. He eventually won the acquittal of all but two of the soldiers, and those two were convicted only of the lesser charge of manslaughter. In June of 1774 Adams was chosen by the Massachusetts legislature as one of five representatives to the First Continental Congress.

Beginning in January of 1775, Adams again wrote a series of letters to the *Boston Gazette*, this time in response to another series written by David Leonard under the pen name Massachusettensis (Adams mistakenly believed that they had been written by Jonathan Sewall). Adopting the name Novanglus, Adams argued that America and Britain shared a common king but were “distinct states.” As such, Adams concluded, they could not be controlled by Parliament except in the area of foreign trade or where they had granted “compact and consent.” In the Novanglus letters, Adams argued a principle later articulated in the Declaration of Independence: that New England derived its law and rights not from Parliamentary or English common law, but from “the law of nature and the compact made with the king in our charters.” Therefore, if the king broke his part of this social contract, his action would also “annul it on the part of the people.” In such a case, Adams concluded, even “open avowed resistance by arms” would not be rebellion but lawful action. When the Novanglus letters were written, Adams still disavowed any intention to seek independence, but after the first