

# ABIGAIL ADAMS CLASSROOM VISITS

**Abigail Adams** (1744-1818) is the only other woman in American history aside from Barbara Bush to be the wife of one president and the mother of another. She also was the first First Lady to live in the new President's mansion later called the White House. Though lacking in formal schooling herself, she strongly believed in education for females and more rights for women in general. Her letters reflect not only the great events of her time, but also the everyday life of women in the 1700's in America.

## Outline and Objectives of Visit

The basic aim of this program for the lower grades is to help children explore how things have changed in this country in 200 years and yet how some things (people and feelings) have remained the same.

After introducing herself and explaining her connections to the White House, Mrs. Adams discusses the role of a President and finds out which Presidents the students know. She also tells of the major event during her lifetime, the American Revolution, and that revolution means change, what was changing and why. The students can then see how the 4th of July, relates to this change.

This leads to the other areas of change to which the children can relate, such as the activities of everyday life and education 200 years ago. Mrs Adams also brings objects into the classroom which would have been in use during the Revolution - a quill pen, a slate, round homemade soap and hand-dipped candles, with an explanation of the making and use of each. In addition, she brings wool, yarn and flax and presents a demonstration of turning raw wool into cloth by carding, spinning on a drop spindle and weaving, thus making homespun. The class is encouraged to ask questions and give examples of things they use now which children in Early America did not have. With a little imagination, the students can begin to see themselves living in a world without electric lights, automobiles or television.

Another important aspect of the classroom visits by Abigail Adams is exploring a child's life 200 years ago. This includes toys and games, going to school and household chores. In this way the children of today can relate to children of another time and realize that some things about childhood never change.