

# First Ladies of America



Louisa Adams was another first lady who did not embrace the role once she reached the White House. Whether motivated by love for her husband, or duty, or both, she nevertheless endured her existence as first lady rather than thriving in the role.

The daughter of an aristocratic American businessman working abroad, Mrs. Adams was born in London while the American Revolution was under way. Much of her youth was spent in France, where her family had moved to escape the tensions between the American colonies and England.

When her father, Joshua Johnson, was appointed U.S. Consul in England, the Johnson home became a natural visiting place for Americans abroad. It was here that the young Louisa met John Quincy Adams, the minister resident to the Netherlands and the son of the vice president of the United States. Intelligent, educated, beautiful and talented, Louisa immediately attracted the attention of the bachelor Adams.

John Quincy Adams and Louisa Johnson married on July 26, 1797, only to be faced with money problems. Her father revealed he was bankrupt, depriving Adams of the dowry he had anticipated, and leaving him to deal with creditors after his wife's family fled to America.

While the marriage got off to a rocky financial start, the ensuing years were not much easier. As the wife of a diplomat, lawyer and politician, Mrs. Adams followed her husband across Europe, the United States, and even to St. Petersburg when President James Madison named him

minister to Russia. Over the years she had three sons, saw her infant daughter die, suffered numerous miscarriages, and was often alone and in ill health. However, Mrs. Adams was a dutiful and committed wife. Despite her personal trials, she threw herself into an endless round of socializing and entertaining to help her husband get elected to the presidency in 1824.

Once the couple attained the White House, however, Mrs. Adams' enthusiasm faded, and she did the minimum required of the executive mansion's hostess. Following in the footsteps of former First Lady Elizabeth Monroe, she limited entertaining. She was often alone and secluded in her room. Her health suffered and she experienced bouts of depression.

The Adams presidency mirrored what the First Lady was experiencing; highly discouraged by the political infighting that plagued his administration, President Adams was often in low spirits as well.

Despite this, Mrs. Adams once again took up the burdens of campaigning for her husband when the 1828 election rolled around, but to no avail. After one of the nastiest campaigns in American history with extensive mud slinging on both sides, Andrew Jackson became the seventh President of the United States.

After leaving the White House, Adams served in the U.S. House of Representatives, and his wife worked closely at his side as together they took up the cause of abolition. Mrs. Adams survived her husband by a little more than four years, dying in 1852. She is buried alongside the former president in Quincy, Massachusetts.

## John Quincy Adams' Administration 1825-1829

## Louisa Catherine Johnson Adams

**Born:** Feb. 12, 1775, in London, England

**Education:** Roman Catholic convent school, Nantes, France; boarding school for girls, England, private tutor, London

**Marriage:** 1797 to John Quincy Adams

**Children:** George Washington (1801-1829); John II (1803-1834); Charles Francis (1807-1886); Louisa Catherine (1811-1812)

**Died:** May 15, 1852, in Washington, D.C.

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