

Crossings- Abigail Was Here (Devonshire)

In 1787 Abigail Adams with her family went to Devonshire. She was advised to go on this journey by Dr. John Jeffries because her health was poor in the spring and winter of that year. Abigail left London on July 20th. The precise date she returned to London is not known , but it is estimated to be around August 20th.

*“At the conclusion of her trip, having reconsidered her experiences, she wrote to Elizabeth Shaw that the visit to Devonshire was “one of the most agreeable excursion I ever made.” The season was delightful, the journey was accomplished at a leisurely pace, and they had been well accommodated at inns. “The country is like a garden and the cultivation scarcely admits any other improvement” However, “I wish I could say as much for the inhabitants, but whilst one part of the people, the noble and wealthy, fare sumptuously every day, poverty, hunger, and nakedness is the lot and portion of the needy peasantry,” she observed, quite shocked at the country life of the English peasants. “The most industrious of them are stinted to 6 pence per day feeding themselves from that pittance. Youth and age feel the extremes of misery, Their cottages and miserable huts astonished me... with plenty on every side, but not an inch of land for them.” She persisted: “The sheppard who is the keeper of thousands of sheep must answer with his life if the pressing needs of his family should tempt him to purloin....nor is he permitted to touch the winged passengers of the air, though it no more belongs to the owner of the mansion than the sun beam which equally shines on the cottage and the palace.” She concluded, “What I have formerly read as Romance, I have seen with my own eyes.”**

The places Abigail visited in Devonshire in alphabetical order:

Axminster (stayed over night at the best inn she had ever seen)

Exeter (stayed in a hotel in the church yard- opposite the Cathedral church)

Horsham (visited)

Ivy Bridge (dined there)

Kingsbridge (stayed and had many relatives there)

Newton bushell (stayed overnight)

Plymouth (stayed visited fortifications, plymouth dock and Mt Edgcume- on Tamar River near saltash)

Totness (dined there)

Order of travel:

Axminster, Honniton (Valley), Exeter, then to Plymouth.

From Plymouth to Kingsbridge. On the journey to Kingsbridge they went to Horseham and Ivy Bridge. They then traveled to Totness and Newton Bunshell on their way back to Exeter.

**Excerpt from “Abigail Adams - A Writing Life” by Edith B. Gelles, p114*

Bitetti used the spelling of Totness and Devonshire as found in the historical writings