7. Attachment to New England

To Abigail Adams

Philadelphia, October 29, 1775

There is in the human breast a social affection which extends to our whole species, faintly indeed, but in some degree. The nation, kingdom, or community to which we belong is embraced by it more vigorously. It is stronger still towards the province to which we belong, and in which we had our birth. It is stronger and stronger as we descend to the county, town, parish, neighborhood and family, which we call our own. And here we find it often so powerful as to become partial, to blind our eyes, to darken our understandings and pervert our wills.

It is to this infirmity in my own heart that I must perhaps attribute that local attachment, that partial fondness, that overweening prejudice in favor of New England, which I feel very often, and which, I fear, sometimes leads me to expose myself to just ridicule.

New England has, in many respects, the advantage of every other colony in America, and, indeed, of every other part of the world that I know anything of.

1. The people are purer English blood; less mixed with Scotch, Irish, Dutch, French, Danish, Swedish, &c., than any other; and descended from Englishmen too, who left Europe in purer times than the present, and less tainted with corruption than those they left behind them.

2. The institutions in New England for the support of religion, morals, and decency exceed any other; obliging every parish to have a minister, and every person to go to meeting, &c.

3. The public institutions in New England for the education of youth, supporting colleges at the public expense, and obliging towns to maintain grammar schools, are not equalled, and never were, in any part of the world.

4. The division of our territory, that is, our counties, into townships; empowering towns to assemble, choose officers, make laws, mend roads and twenty other things, gives every man an opportunity of showing and improving that education which he received at college or at school, and makes knowledge and dexterity at public business common.

5. But in opposition to these we have labored under many disadvantages. The exorbitant prerogative of our Governors, &c., which would have overborne our liberties if it had not been opposed by the five preceding particulars.