

BRAVE BID TO BEAT SMALLPOX

ABIGAIL ADAMS yesterday struck a courageous blow against the smallpox that is ravaging the Boston area, *writes our medical correspondent, July 13, 1776.*

While her husband John Adams campaigned for the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia, Abigail Adams prepared her children for inoculation against deadly, disfiguring smallpox.

She brought her family from their Braintree farm into disease-ridden Boston, where she and her children were inoculated by Dr. Thomas Bulfinch, an expert.

Small amounts of smallpox-infected tissue were introduced into cuts made in the healthy children's arms. The hope is that the young patients will develop only minor cases of smallpox from this procedure. Then they will be immune from catching a

more serious or deadly case of the disease later.

In previous attempts, it worked in some, but others suffered days of delirium and fever. And often the inoculation must be repeated.

The patients can take weeks to recover, but they will never again fear this disease—they will be immune for the rest of their lives. Although Adams and her children are not the first to be inoculated, their bravery will set an example.

SMALLPOX and other diseases seriously impacted the Native people in New England. There was an epidemic in every decade throughout the 17th century that took even further tolls on the populations of the Indigenous nations. In the 18th century, two thirds of the Nantucket Wampanoag people died after smallpox inoculation. Entire communities were wiped out, as were generations of ancestral knowledge about oral histories, relations with the Earth, and many cultural and spiritual traditions.