

A Letter from David McCullough

January 13, 2008

Dear David,

I appreciate very much that you would take the time to write such a generous thoughtful letter. I am also glad to hear of what you've been doing since Hillsdale.

On the matter of John Adam's favorite poets—that's a first-rate question, and one I don't believe I've ever been asked before. When writing my book I tried as best I could not only to read what he wrote, but what he read, since we are all perhaps more than what we know, what we read.

The great favorite English poet of that time was Alexander Pope, and Adams, indeed both John and Abigail, greatly admired Pope. For John, I would say that Shakespeare and the Psalms ranked first, or first and second, however.

And yes, Adams did write in the margins of his books—and how! There is one volume in the Boston Public Library collection in which it would appear he wrote more than the author did! In all there are 80 some books in the collection in which he had his say—and what he wrote is almost always interesting. My favorite is a small volume of Cicero's, the first book he ever owned, which he was given or purchased himself (we don't know), and such was his pride, at age 14, that he wrote his name in it six times.

My best to you in all your endeavors,

David McCullough