

The background of the cover is a light yellow-green gradient. It is decorated with several stylized, light green leaf motifs that appear to be floating or falling from the top left towards the bottom right. These motifs are simple, elongated shapes with a small stem and two leaflets.

POLITICS OF CONSCIENCE

A Biography of Margaret Chase Smith

Patricia Ward Wallace

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Politics of Conscience

A BIOGRAPHY OF
MARGARET CHASE SMITH

Patricia Ward Wallace

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For the best friend I ever had

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PREFACE

Margaret Chase Smith was the most influential woman in the history of American politics. Her only significant rival was Eleanor Roosevelt, who influenced more as symbol than as policy maker. For thirty-two years Smith served in Congress and worked with committees on military affairs, appropriations, government operations, space, and intelligence. Twice Republicans considered her a vice presidential possibility, and in 1964 she launched the first campaign by a woman for the presidential nomination of a major party. Indicative of her longevity and her bid for national office, Smith served both a state constituency in Maine and a larger group of supporters in the nation. She went from being Maine's daughter to America's heroine, and she did it with her conscience and reputation intact. Along the way Smith developed a unique political partnership with William C. Lewis with whom she lived and worked, in both office and retirement.

History does not allow for heroines any more than heroes when recounting human activity, and Margaret Chase Smith, revealed, was as replete with petty rancors, vengeance, ambitions, and self-doubts as anyone else. Her public persona, however, was the New England lady: gracious, reticent, frugal, hard working, and honest. From this mixture came a skillful politician who found her way through the congressional labyrinth of conflicting interests as an independent. No one ever took her vote for granted, and she never acknowledged the sexist discrimination and patronizing of her colleagues unless it denied her rights due a senator. Then she responded with a fury that taught others to be wary. In this manner she challenged Joseph McCarthy, Dwight Eisenhower, John Kennedy, and Richard Nixon. As prototype for female and minority politicians, Smith succeeded in her goal to be a U.S. senator, not a woman senator, and she did this by overcoming gender instead

of championing it. Never a feminist, Smith did not practice sisterhood or work for the significant women's legislation of the 1960s and 1970s. Instead, she worked for Maine and the nation as a cold warrior and became an unrepentant proponent of the military-industrial complex and of nuclear power.

I illustrate the anomalies of Margaret Chase Smith by beginning each chapter with a revealing vignette. Each opening scene is based on fact, and quotations are documented, but in some of them, I supply dialogue illustrative of the situation.

I first met Senator Smith in 1977 when she, accompanied by Bill Lewis, came to Baylor University as a distinguished lecturer. For me and my students in women's history and in foreign relations, she was history come to life. I arranged for Senator Smith to return in 1979 for a week of seminars with students and faculty. Again in tandem with Lewis, Smith enthralled as she recounted her political experiences, which illumined twentieth-century American history. We corresponded during the following years, and eventually an invitation came to research her newly opened library. Bill Lewis was dead by then, and Senator Smith generously shared her memories with me in hour after hour of interviews. But then our relationship changed when I began interviewing her family, friends, and political colleagues and asking Smith about conflicting interpretations. My use of the historical method Senator Smith saw as disloyalty, and to my keen disappointment she told me in a final interview on 28 September 1988, "When you ask me something and I give you an answer, there can't be any other interpretation of that."

Her attitude was not shared by the professional staff at the Margaret Chase Smith Library, and I thank the three respective directors, James MacCampbell, Russell Fridley, and Gregory Gallant, for administering as well organized a research facility as I have visited. Graciously assisted by Angela Stockwell and Reginald Collins, Gallant, in particular, ensured my access to every one of the eighty file drawers of correspondence; more than four hundred scrapbooks; over a hundred volumes of statements, speeches, and hearings; and thousands of photographs and objects in the museum and storage room. For all their historical value, the scrapbooks proved a problem in documenting because Senator Smith's Washington office seldom indicated the source and date of newspaper clippings, magazine articles, and other memorabilia.

Apart from my research, the best memory I have of my stay in Maine is of my friendship with Evelyn Worth. To this day when in search of solace, my mind returns to her cottage on North Pond, which she made available for my use, with its island, ospreys, and loons.

I also thank those in Maine and Washington who allowed me to plunder their memories of Margaret Chase Smith. I will always treasure Barry Goldwater's telling me, in response to my asking if his health permitted an interview, that he felt good enough to wrestle a bear. Sadly memorable, J. William

Fulbright, after being unable to recall an incident, said that he did not intend to have any more interviews because his memory was failing. Strom Thurmond's office with its four high walls covered floor to ceiling with awards, commendations, and photographs was as striking as the man is. A modest George Mitchell, in the splendor of the majority leader's office, praised Senator Smith, but when I asked if he had criticisms, he replied that he would leave it to others to criticize. Robert Dole, pressed as to why Maine became one of the nation's poorest states despite Smith's influence, responded with sharp humor that the state had two senators. Other memories include John Stennis's frail voice over the telephone, Edmund Muskie's dour unpleasantness, Liz Carpenter's raucous good humor, William Cohen's office library (the only one I saw in visiting dozens of congressional offices), and Edward Brooke's special empathy for Senator Smith's separateness as female.

My daughter, Devon Ward, shepherded me through this project, as she has through life, by accompanying me to Maine, sharing research responsibilities, and exploring with me the joys and Beans of Maine.

I especially appreciate my colleagues Paul F. Boller, Jr., Robert A. Divine, and Robert G. Collmer who showed me the extraordinary courtesy of reading my early chapters and pointing me in good directions. In addition, I thank my research assistants—Jay Shobe, Douglas Doe, Patricia Santa-Cruz, Mary Margaret Adams, Ron Capshaw, and Charles Muskiet—for searching out the forgotten dates, lost books, necessary facts, and names for the index.

Lynnette Geary, administrative assistant and bedrock of the Department of History at Baylor University, typed the manuscript with the admirable efficiency that she employed on my preceding six manuscripts.

Baylor University's generous sabbatical and research grant programs, instituted by President Herbert H. Reynolds, made this project possible. In fact, President Reynolds hosted the luncheon for Senator Smith and General Lewis at which we first discussed a biography. As long as universities like Baylor encourage scholarship, careers as significant as Margaret Chase Smith's will not be forgotten but will be recorded to educate us all.

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INTRODUCTION: SHOWCASING A LEGEND

The mammoth bus, filled with Quebec-bound tourists during the summer of 1988, turned off highway 201 in the small town of Skowhegan, Maine, and lumbered up Neil Hill, then pulled off the narrow road in front of a small, white frame house, an unlikely tourist stop. Without disembarking, the passengers stared through the bus's large windows into the house's glass-enclosed atrium while the tour guide explained why they had stopped and whom they were viewing.

On exhibit inside, as in a department store window, was a small, white-haired woman with a fresh rose on her lapel. She was conducting an interview with yet another aspiring historian. Startled when the bus blocked out the sun and darkened the room, the interviewer looked out in puzzlement at the gaping tourists with their cameras poised. With vision in decline like body, the object of the unmitigated curiosity perceived the sudden shadow and asked, "What is it?"

Appalled at the blatant intrusion, the interviewer managed, "A busload of tourists." The unexpected response was a quiet smile, as erect a posture as the stooped shoulders allowed, and a practiced lifting of the prominent, squared-off chin. With the interviewer now watching this performance in miniature as awestruck as those on the bus, the woman, still seated, raised her right forearm from her lap and opened her hand in monarchical wave.

In the five minutes that the whole incident took before the bus continued on to Canada, the interviewer realized that the wave was a pleased welcome to a not-unexpected occurrence. Indeed the room—brightly lit overhead by a sky light, sparsely furnished with wicker chairs, and colorfully contrasted with white walls, black slate floor, and red door—resembled a stage set facing an audience on wheels. Until her death in 1995, passers-by on their way

to Shop 'n Save, the post office, or the Old Mill Pub as well as to Quebec City could view Skowhegan's, and possibly Maine's, most famous resident from early morning when she read and answered her steady stream of mail until late afternoon when the last of her visitors departed. Admittedly on a reduced stage with a declining audience, Margaret Chase Smith in her ninetieth year nonetheless continued, as she had most of her life, to live in public view.

Already in history textbooks as the first woman to be elected to both the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate, Smith spent the years since her defeat in 1972 lecturing on college campuses, serving on boards of directors, and planning the Margaret Chase Smith Library Center. Dedicated in 1982, the center, more museum than library, is an addition to what used to be Smith's home. Only a red velvet rope separated the exhibit hall from the atrium where Smith spent her days. Almost daily, retired couples, groups of schoolchildren, or women traveling in twos or threes stopped by the secluded location overlooking the Kennebec River and viewed the memorabilia of Smith's thirty-two years in Congress. On entering, the visitor saw hanging overhead in the high-ceilinged room some of the ninety-five colorful academic hoods presented to Smith with honorary degrees from colleges and universities throughout the nation. On a dress form was the uniform Smith wore as a lieutenant colonel in the Air Force Reserves, and in a display case was the makeup kit she used on her around-the-world tour with Edward R. Murrow's "See It Now" television crew. There was the hat she threw into the 1964 presidential campaign, "Margaret Chase Smith for President" posters and buttons, and a red and white "Smith for President" pot holder. Everywhere there were elephants and roses of innumerable sizes, descriptions, and materials: sculptures, paintings, jewelry; realistic, comic, imaginative; gold, sterling, ceramic, wood, bronze, plastic, china, pewter, ivory, and crystal. Lining the wall were photographs of Smith with Presidents Dwight David Eisenhower, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Lyndon Baines Johnson, and Richard Milhous Nixon, all of whom, along with Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Harry S Truman, passed through the White House while she was in Congress. On the walls were wonderful photographs of a lovely, young, smiling Margaret Chase Smith inspecting a World War II battleship, conducting a hearing on the Korean War ammunition shortage, and meeting with Winston Churchill, Chiang Kai-shek, Jawaharlal Nehru, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Pierre Mendès-France, and Francisco Franco. Most prominently displayed was the cornerstone of Smith's political career, her 1 June 1950 Declaration of Conscience speech against Senator Joseph McCarthy.

Always there were uninformed visitors motivated by curiosity, lacking anything else to do, or fleeing the hot or cold weather outside who wandered in, looked awhile, and then asked the receptionist if Senator Smith was dead. Well-mannered visitors, after thanking the receptionist for their free souvenir postcards and pencils, frequently remarked that Smith was a remarkable woman. During her last years there were also those who meandered

down the display hall past the childhood mementos and political cartoons to the red velvet rope and the silent, near-blind woman working just beyond. These hastened back to the receptionist to ask if “that woman” was Senator Smith and then joked about a “living museum exhibit” and “a senator on display.” Emboldened, some of these visitors asked for an introduction or permission to take a photograph for some aunt, grandparent, or friend who once met Senator Smith. More often than not, Senator Smith agreed to pose and chat for a minute in a manner reminiscent of her receiving visitors in her congressional office long ago when her days were so full. To this day the most striking, and probably the most common visitor to this unique memorial to a political career, is the one, usually young, who walks in, looks around for a minute, and then asks, “Who was she?”

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Chapter One

MAINE'S DAUGHTER

*The top shelf was six feet off the floor and, adding to Margaret's incentive, contained boxes of assorted candies, but despite standing on tiptoes and stretching, she had to admit defeat. The manager of Green Brothers five-and-ten-cent store smiled indulgently and told the twelve-year-old job applicant to come back when she was taller. He knew Margaret as a regular customer and also because her mother often worked for him. Amused when Margaret had seriously approached him "in a business-like way" to say that she "would like very much to be considered as a part time employee," he had used her height as an excuse to turn her away. His mistake had been to say that when she could reach the shelved merchandise "to come back and he would talk to her seriously."*¹

Green Brothers on Water Street was Margaret's childhood heaven. She and her friends had spent more time than money there for years as they roamed the aisles to look at the staggering assortment of items, most of which cost five to ten cents. There were tortoise shell combs and velvet ribbons, pearl necklaces and gold rings, rubber balls and jump ropes with handles, sweet-smelling perfumes and real (not homemade) soap, and hundreds of ceramic figurines, what-nots, and glass vases, bowls, and boxes. Junk to many, unobtainable luxury goods to Margaret, but if she worked there among them, they would be hers to smell and touch and sell, and, better, with her own money to buy.

Determinedly, Margaret returned time and again through the sixth grade and the following summer, and always she eyed her nemesis, the six-foot-high top shelf behind the counters. Finally, when she was thirteen and in the seventh grade, more desirous than ever of Green's exotic goods, she came back to remind the manager of his promise. She still had to stand on tiptoe,

but this time she could reach the top boxes of candy, and with a triumphantly expectant smile she faced the manager.

Participants in the pioneer settlement of Maine, members of Margaret Chase Smith's family were as rock-ribbed New Englanders as it was possible to be. Her father's lineage proudly went back to early colonial America and the founding of New Hampshire, but specifically to the colony's criminal court records. The first American Chase, Aquila, was probably born in England about 1618 and emigrated to New Hampshire as a young man. By 1639 he, his wife Ann, and his brother-in-law David Wheeler were "presented" before Hampton's court, "admonished," and fined for "gathering pease [*sic*] on the first day of the week." Breaking the Sabbath was a serious offense in Puritan New England, but Chase practicality held that the peas had to be picked when they were ripe.²

The Chases continued to live in New Hampshire for two more generations, but a third-generation son, Isaac, born in Concord on 30 December 1766, departed for Maine. For Isaac Chase, Maine was the unsettled frontier, an unknown area for most Americans, and one with promise. Dawnland was the Indian name for Maine, and other tribes referred to Maine's Indians as Dawnlanders, from *Wabonaki*, or "living at the sunrise."³ Norumbega was the earliest English reference to Maine, somewhere on the "back side" of Nova Scotia and vaguely located on the Penobscot River. Originally a place name from a 1529 map drawn by the explorer Giovanni da Verrazano, the first European to see Dawnland, Norumbega became an English Cibola, a golden city with "pyllors of Cristoll."⁴ More practically, Captain John Smith—mercenary, mariner, and former commander of the English colony of Jamestown—in 1614 designated the area New England and advocated settlement. Another English soldier, Sir Ferdinando Gorges, formed the Council for New England and by 1629 named and was proprietor of the Province of Maine. Although he never reached Maine himself, Gorges motivated early settlements there and earned the title Father of Maine.

Margaret Chase Smith's ancestors had to contend not only with fierce Indian determination to hold on to their lands but with a successful alliance between the Abnaki Indians and French colonizers to the north. From first sighting, the Abnakis had been damned as "bad people." In that incident the Indians had agreed to trade with the explorers on their ships but only through a basket raised and lowered from "some rocks where the breakers were most violent," and "when we had nothing more to exchange and left them, the men made all the signs of scorn and shame that any brute creature would make, such as exhibiting their bare behinds, and laughing immoderately."⁵ In lightning attacks the Abnakis burned hundreds of farm houses and killed or captured over seven hundred colonists in settlements from Pemaquid, Berwick, York, and Kittery. The devastation brought Maine to the attention of the Puritan divine Cotton Mather, who decided for the sake

of both God and Massachusetts that Maine should come under the direction of Boston. Religious refugees had established Puritanism at Plymouth in 1620 and had considerably strengthened it at Massachusetts Bay in 1630. Military expansion followed by religious dominance penetrated Connecticut almost immediately, and beginning in 1637 Massachusetts assumed control of New Hampshire. Now Boston extended its defense perimeter into Maine, and by the end of the 1600s Mather's missionary army of young parsons had followed Boston's political commissioners north. So complete was Puritan hegemony that Massachusetts controlled Maine until the 1820 Missouri Compromise.⁶

Reflecting the hard work required to clear the howling wilderness in which they found themselves, the Puritans sanctified work and taught that worship of God included dutiful attention to a secular calling. The Puritans made sins of idleness and luxury and virtues of industry and thrift. Like centurions taking Roman law throughout the empire, Massachusetts's ministers spread their practical doctrine throughout New England.

Isaac Chase, like most other Mainers, accepted the philosophy but rejected the politics and agitated for independence from Boston. In perceiving themselves as different from Massachusetts citizens, Mainers developed a unique—some would say peculiar—self-image. Their peculiarities became a cherished aspect of their collective character and as integral as their verities of hard work, economy, and prudence. Mainers valued their own practical wisdom and natural wit over that of outsiders, particularly learned ones, and developed a distinct, salty, downeast dialect so that even language separated them from Massachusetts. Mainers also acquired a self-confident identity as independent, self-sufficient, assertive, and conservative, even among other New England Yankees. This early, Maine was as much a state of mind, an attitude, as a place, and Isaac Chase was shaped as much by geography as by genetics.

With a 3,000-acre land grant from the government to encourage settlement in Maine, Isaac Chase married Bridget Delano in Winslow in 1786 and lived in Sidney before settling eight miles south of Skowhegan in Fairfield in 1805. Becoming Captain Isaac Chase in the War of 1812 and commanding an artillery company, he also fathered eleven children, one of whom he named Isaac, after himself. This second Isaac Chase, born 15 May 1800, married Rachel Emery in 1825. Their sixth child, John Wesley Chase, born in Fairfield on 6 May 1837, was the father of George Emery Chase and grandfather of Margaret Chase Smith.⁷

The 3,000 acres of land were gone by the time of the second Isaac Chase. With primogeniture and entail, which had required property to be passed intact to the first-born son, no longer the law, the land had either been divided among the many Chase children or sold off in parcels for income. Probably a combination of division and sale accounted for the dissipation of the land grant by the 1820s and for Isaac to be earning his living as a

minister. Acknowledged as “famous for the preaching of the gospel in many parts of the state, and a man of great power and influence,” Chase, according to an 1822 document, “visited the opening in the forest” and “reported there had been a revival, the fruits of a pious school teacher.”⁸

His son, John Wesley Chase, fought with the Union army in the South during the Civil War but returned to Fairfield to become a Methodist minister. He married Margaret Nolan, had a daughter, Alice, and two sons besides George Emery. The three other Chase children attended school, but George refused to go. Both John Wesley and Margaret died young, John Wesley at thirty-nine and Margaret in her early forties. George Chase first worked as a hotel clerk, then learned the barbering trade through a long apprenticeship, and eventually moved to nearby Skowhegan to open a barber shop.

Less is known about the lineage of Smith’s mother, Carrie Murray Chase. Her grandmother, Mary Boulette, born in 1850, probably came to Maine from that section of New Brunswick that the Scots had settled. Her grandfather, John L. Murray, was born in St. Georges, Canada, in 1846, and soon afterward his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Lambert Murray, without a land grant, moved to Skowhegan with him.

Whatever illusions the Chases and Murrays had about opportunity in Maine, they quickly learned that nature had the upper hand. The huge granite slabs that pushed up through the ground stood as barricades to use of the good soil. The towering forests of huge trees cowed those who sought to cut them, and on the rocky seacoast there were no white, sandy beaches but, rather, the angry North Atlantic that dared men to wrestle for its wealth. Then for nine or ten months of the year, there was the cold to battle as the world turned white and icy with body-numbing gale-force winds. Those who survived—and many did not—became as rugged as the land and sea and lived an unrelenting life of work. Mainers earned their clear, blue-eyed squint of suspicion, thin-lipped smile of hard-fought triumph, and craggy, weathered faces, and they passed what allowed them precarious survival on to their children.

The village of Skowhegan, which attracted the Chases and Murrays, was, like many of Maine’s other towns, determined by a waterway. In this instance, it was the Kennebec River, which flows from the great northern Moosehead Lake southward for 150 miles to Bath and the Atlantic. As a prospering mill and factory town, Skowhegan required and achieved a predominant population of laborers. Immigration south of land-poor Canadians from Quebec supplemented the continued migration north and made for a colorful ethnic mix of French and English languages and Catholic and Protestant churches. By 1900, 33 percent of the residents were French-Canadian. For long hours and limited wages, residents, male and female, sawed shingles, fashioned brooms, felted cloth, carded wool, and stitched shoes. With little wealth in town, there were no sharp class divisions but rather a

middle-class population of hard-working home owners with large families to support.

As a young man John Murray began working at the Dane Sash and Blind factory. He earned \$1.25 for a twelve-hour day and continued there for forty years. About 1860, using his woodworking skills, John built a six-room, white clapboard, two-story house on a maple-shaded lot on North Avenue for his bride, Mary. The Murrays had a daughter Annie, a son William who soon died, and on 10 May 1876 Carrie Matilda. Mary died at age thirty-two when Carrie was six, but her father soon remarried, to a woman named Addie Lessor, with whom he had a third daughter, Laura.

A pretty child, Carrie Matilda learned to play the banjo and accompanied her sister Annie who played the piano. She easily made friends at school and was a good student, but as she grew older, her great desire was for a job and the independence that she thought would accompany work. Carrie's closest friends were older girls, and when they left school for jobs that seemed glamorous to her, she too decided to leave school. Believing she was making a mistake, her father tried to keep Carrie in school by pointing to the better jobs that she could acquire with a high school diploma. Unpersuaded, Carrie chafed under the restrictions of Skowhegan High School until her senior year in 1894 and then, not quite three months before she would have graduated, quit. Since 1875 education had been mandatory in Maine but only up to age fifteen. Carrie continued to live at home but found a job with her friends at a shoe factory and was happy with her escape from academia. When she proudly showed her first week's wages to her father, he said that since she was now an employed woman, she would have to pay him five dollars a week for room and board. Startled at having her grand salary depleted by the necessities of shelter and food, Carrie nonetheless understood the lesson her father was teaching and contributed to the family income. Two years later at age twenty, Carrie married George Chase, twenty-one, and John Murray asked the young couple to move in with him. Gratefully, they accepted and were surprised when John also gave them a wedding present: a bank book for an account with over five hundred dollars on deposit. John had deposited each of Carrie's five-dollar payments to him to demonstrate another New England verity, thrift. In 1896, five hundred dollars was a munificent gift and an unexpected bonanza for the young couple. In the few months of marriage before obvious pregnancy forced her confinement, Carrie continued working at the shoe factory and became a skilled "fancy stitcher," one of the better positions.⁹ George's three-chair barber shop was prominently located on Madison and Water streets, and his personable, easy-going manner attracted a steady clientele.

On 14 December 1897 Dr. J.N. Merrill delivered a baby girl to twenty-one-year-old Carrie and twenty-two-year-old George Chase in their home on North Avenue. According to her certificate of baptism from Notre Dame de Lourdes in Skowhegan, Margaret Chase Smith was christened Marguerite

Mandeline Chase on 18 December 1897. While the certificate lists her father as George Chase, it lists her mother as Caroline Morin and sponsors as Lambert Morin and Adile Lessard. The rumor that Smith was French-Canadian, which carried stigma, haunted her entire political career, but the speculation was always that *Chase* had been anglicized from *Chasse*, not that *Murray* was originally *Morin* or that *Margaret Madeline* was *Marguerite Mandeline*.¹⁰ Margaret Madeline became the eldest of six Chase children born during the next fifteen years. A son, Wilbur George, followed in 1899, then two more boys, Roland Murray and Laurence Franklin, a second daughter, Evelyn in 1909, and finally Laura in 1912.

Margaret's parents were poor, hard working, barely educated, honest, and proud—Mainers. Home and family were central in the lives of the Chase children. "I can't stress that enough," Smith said years later. Her parents "were very, very particular about the home and the family. The home was everything to them."¹¹ For the family, there was the stability and permanence of the home always being the house on North Avenue in Skowhegan. The kitchen, "good-sized," was the heart of the house and had a wood-burning range stove, a large sink, and a pump that grandfather John Murray had connected to the well in the yard. There was a pantry with cupboards off the kitchen on one side and on the other a porch with a hammock, chairs, and a clothesline for Carrie's wash when the weather, more often than not, did not allow her to hang it outside to dry. Toward the front of the house was a combined sitting room—dining room, where the family ate all their meals, and close by was George's and Carrie's small bedroom. The front room with a bay window was the parlor, "a real parlor, dark and gloomy," and "closed except for funerals and weddings. If I ever had to go in that room I walked in and backed out," Smith reminisced. "I was afraid of that room." The front door opened into a hall with the stairway. The "sizeable" front room upstairs was always Margaret's bedroom; the other children shared the larger middle room, and Grandfather Murray had the back bedroom.

Out back behind the kitchen was a connected shed leading to an attached water closet and a barn, because extended cold winters required the attachment of outbuildings to the house. The family kept wood and later coal in the long shed, and the barn housed a hay loft, a horse ("we always had a horse"), a pig ("we never had more than one"), a cow, and some chickens.¹² Village life was synonymous with farm life except that the family did not raise a cash crop, just a food crop. George kept a large vegetable garden behind the barn on his lot, milked the cow, gathered eggs, and butchered a hog each fall. He was particular about the lot, and Smith joked that he would not let people walk on his grounds unless they took their shoes off. In the spring Carrie planted a flower garden and kept flower boxes on the windows.

Carrie's work was constant. In addition to sixteen years of being pregnant, caring for an infant, or rearing six young children, she was responsible for

preparing the family's food: cooking three meals a day for eight people; canning, preserving, smoking, salting, and drying food from the garden and livestock; separating cream from the cow's milk to churn into butter; baking bread; and keeping her kitchen stove burning. Then there was the cleaning up of the dishes, pots, and pans, the house, clothes, and children, which required pumping water to heat on the stove each time she washed dishes, mopped floors, did the wash, and bathed the children. Lamp chimneys had to be cleaned each day, wicks trimmed, and bases filled with kerosene in order to light the house each evening. That left ironing clothes after she had cut them out and sewed them, and mended them countless times. Carrie's generation made their own mattresses, quilts, and bed linens, as well as their own soap and cleansers and many of their medicines and cosmetics. The children remembered that Carrie was "a very good cook" and that the house was always "immaculate."¹³

With all this to do, there were still times when Carrie had to work outside the home to supplement the money her husband and father brought home. Sometimes she could take her old job back at the shoe factory or get on at the five-and-dime, but most often Carrie found part-time work at the Coburn Hotel waiting on tables. The most elegant building in town, the Coburn was built in 1882 on the northern corner of Elm Street and Madison Avenue where the Old Red Dragon Tavern had been constructed in 1811, only to be replaced by the Skowhegan Hotel and then the Brewster House. George Chase had also worked as a waiter at the Coburn, and the work allowed Carrie to come and go while caring for her young family.

During one of the many hard times, George moved his barber shop to a room he built on to the left of his father-in-law's house on North Avenue. Hair cuts were fifteen cents and would only get up to thirty-five cents, so even with a rent-free shop, he did not earn a large income. Chase's shop had one barber chair, one ornate gilt-framed mirror, and one shelf of shaving mugs, each personalized with the owner's name. A few blocks away, Ed Sayers had another barber shop, and then there was the problem with George's health. He had migraine headaches, which frequently kept him from work. Driven by pain, he would retreat through the door that connected the shop to his home and lie in darkness as Carrie applied steaming hot packs to his head. The children grew up remembering his face a "fiery red" and Carrie "hovering over him with packs." Bucknam's headache powders, which cost twenty-five cents, did not do much good. George's affliction proved hereditary and affected Margaret, Evelyn, Laura, and some of their children. Over the years George became "a rather retiring kind of man. He didn't say too much," as Evelyn remembered. He also lost his hair quite young and was completely bald. Barber sensitive, he wore an artificial hair-piece, which many never knew about.¹⁴

"My father was a good father," Smith maintained, "but my mother was a wonderful mother." She remembered George Chase as "strict," "partic-

ular,” and frequently ill, but Carrie was loving, fun, “strong-minded,” “active and capable.” As the oldest child and daughter, Margaret became Carrie’s partner in caring for the house and the other children. They forged a lifetime bond that not only provided Margaret with the certainty that she was treasured and needed but also that she could be as capable and independent as Carrie. In her immediate family Margaret also had another role model, Grandfather John Murray. For the first twenty-four years of her life, she lived with him and observed that he was “very energetic, hard-working,” and frugal and that he had “principles by which he lived.” “My mother was like he was,” Smith concluded, and she would be like her mother.¹⁵

Margaret grew up, according to neighbor Wallace Bilodeau, in “a plain working-class neighborhood,” composed of families with similar backgrounds, incomes, and values.¹⁶ On North and nearby Heselton, East, Winter, and Lawton streets there were numerous children and two grammar schools, Lincoln and Garfield. Their mother and father “didn’t care for us to go to other places,” Smith said, but they welcomed other children into their home.¹⁷ “Have as good a time as you want, but have it at home,” Carrie and George taught. Possibly they kept their children close to home because they had two children who had died suddenly. Roland Murray, their second son, developed pneumonia when he was one and a half years old and died overnight. “My mother never did get over that child being taken,” Smith believed, but it was the third son, Laurence Franklin, named after George’s brother, whom Smith remembered best. As the older sister, she “loved to dress him up and take him out” for a walk because he was a “handsome child” with a “very, very bright mind.” When Laurence Franklin was two years and ten months old, he became ill with dysentery and quickly died.

Margaret grew into a short, pudgy, round-faced child whose photographs depict a serene to solemn little girl with a quiet smile and startlingly blue eyes steadily fixed on the camera. She had long, dark curls parted in the middle with hair ribbons on each side or pulled straight back with a large floppy bow. She had a stubborn streak that could bend her parents’ will to her own. Once when the other little girls were wearing their hair in a dutch cut, Margaret decided that she also wanted short hair. Her mother and father said no, but she insisted and went into the barber’s shop and “did a little crying.” Carrie gave in first; people said Carrie “would never deny her,” but before her father capitulated, he held the scissors up threateningly. “It’s about the only thing I remember about those early days vividly,” Smith reminisced while running her fingers through her short, curly hair. “I can see him now holding those shears up.” George said, “It’s going to be too late in a second. You going to change your mind? And I said no, and he cut my hair.” When he finished, Smith said, “It was not a pleasing sight,” but all Carrie said when she returned home was, “Oooh, Margaret.”¹⁸

In 1903 at age five Margaret entered kindergarten at the Lincoln School, a wooden two-story building built in 1869, just a few minutes from her

house. She usually walked with her chum Pauline Bragg, whom Margaret complained always had larger hair ribbons than she. Her class began with about thirty-five students, and Margaret enjoyed school but said, "I wasn't much of a student, nobody paid much attention to me as I remember." In second grade Lizzie Higgins was her teacher, and Gertrude Townsend taught her in the third grade. Margaret moved next door to the adjacent four-room brick Garfield School for grades four through six. Rudimentary at best, Margaret's education involved one teacher each year attempting to instruct thirty to thirty-five students in a variety of subjects, especially the basics of writing, reading, spelling, and arithmetic. Little to no thought was given to science, music, art, literature, history, or geography. For working-class families literacy was more the goal than a broad education, and "learning was rote memorization and recitation to the teacher," said Margaret who remembered that she always had a good memory.¹⁹

Skowhegan was a good place to grow up: rural, slow paced, and small enough for everyone to know everyone else. Margaret's childhood was stable and secure. She accepted her parents' love and concern as her natural right, and like many other first-born children, knew that she was uniquely treasured, especially by Carrie. Never touched by tragedy or want, Margaret grew into a remarkably mature person who was ready for independence, and in the Chase family, as in the state of Maine, that meant work. Without her even knowing, Maine was working its magic on Margaret, molding her, as it had her parents and grandparents, into a born-and-bred New Englander.

Work for increasing remuneration became the quintessential focus of Margaret's youth and surpassed school, friends, boys, and even family. "I must have been very ambitious," was Smith's understatement.²⁰ Years later there were frequent references to Smith's going from working in a five-and-ten-cent store to the U.S. Senate and having to work because she was from a poor family. Not only was she a young girl when she worked at Green's, but also there is considerable question as to whether her family was poor. They owned the two-story house in which they lived, took regular vacations at East Pond, and soon gave up the rented cottage there for one her father built at Lakewood, where he also bought a boat. There were the piano lessons, a six-party telephone, and a car, costing five hundred dollars, for George early in the 1920s. "Somewhere along the way, I presume, it sounded good for a girl from a poor family to do what I did," Smith said. "I didn't go to work because we were poor. I went to work because I wanted to be independent. I wanted to spend my own money as I wanted to. And I did. That is exactly what I did."²¹

Margaret's next job was with the telephone company as a substitute operator. By this time she was in high school and had a reputation for wanting work. The night operator called and asked if she would like to come to the telephone office upstairs in the Masonic Hall on Water Street and let her teach Margaret how the switchboard worked. Then when the operator

wanted time off, Margaret could work for her for ten cents an hour or all night for one dollar. From time to time the “day girls” who had to work until 8:30 P.M. wanted off an hour or so earlier and would also be willing to pay Margaret. Accepting immediately, Margaret knew how she would spend the money: on shoes. Because of her height she had started wearing high heels and became “a great shoe woman.”²²

Skowhegan had battery telephones in the 1870s, and during the 1880s Bell Telephone Company opened an exchange in the Western Union office. The switchboard Margaret learned was manual, with four sections of numbers and plugs. Although there was a published directory of numbers, callers commonly asked the central operator to connect them with a person by name, not number. This practice meant Margaret had to memorize the telephone directory as well as learn the mechanics of the plugs. Smith maintained that the work “helped her memory immensely” and seventy-five years later illustrated by remembering that the insurance man John C. Griffin who would “kind of bark at you when you would . . . say, ‘number please’ ” was himself number thirty-one.²³ Margaret also learned patience. “Goodness, if there’s anything you need it’s patience with people on the telephone,” Smith remarked. She developed an ingratiating telephone manner and retained it. Witnessed talking on the telephone at age ninety-one, Smith metamorphosed into a young woman who slid down in her chair, stretched her legs out in front of her, and crossed them at the ankles. Vivaciously and with notable charm, she teased, laughed, and even flirted with her male caller for an obviously enjoyable and long period of time.

Working alone all night in a large building was spooky and tiring, although there was not much activity after 11:00 P.M. and there was a couch on which to sleep. One thing it was not to a teenaged high school student was boring, because Margaret listened to as many of the conversations as she could. “Oh, indeed, I did,” Smith chuckled, “that’s how I knew what people were doing.”²⁴ One school couple whom she knew talked every evening from nine until ten, or at least they kept a line open without saying much except to inquire every so often if the other person was still there. Margaret not only knew a great deal about what was going on in town, she also became well known; in a small town in the early 1900s the telephone operator was an important person—a vital link to the doctor, fire department, police, and everyone else in town.

Number fifty-nine became a regular caller to the switchboard every evening at about a quarter to eight. Margaret first noticed that “this pleasant voice would come in and say would you please tell me the time. And I would give him the time. The next night he’d do the same thing. It went on night after night.”²⁵ Margaret learned that he was Clyde Smith, “the first select-man in town, very prominent,” recently divorced, and twenty-one years older than she. Intrigued, she told Pauline, “He has the most fascinating voice. I always try to answer him just as impressively,” and she carefully gave him

the time, in hour, minutes, and seconds. "It was kind of pleasant," Smith concluded later, and although "I didn't offer to talk to him for awhile . . . I did later on. I kind of dragged my voice."

Impressionable sixteen year old or not, Margaret was among many in Skowhegan who were impressed with Clyde Smith. He was by many accounts a handsome, dynamic, articulate man at a time and place when dependability was valued over appearance, solemnity preferable to charm, and reticence appreciated more than rhetoric. From birth a peacock among Maine loons, Clyde Harold Smith was born north of Skowhegan on a farm overlooking the village of Harmony on 9 June 1876, the same year as Margaret's mother. His father, William Franklin Smith, and mother, Angie Bartlette, both farmed and operated a store. Clyde started school in the "little red school-house" at Harmony and helped his father by driving a team to deliver groceries.²⁶ The family, including two other sons, Kleber and Myron, moved to nearby Hartland in 1891, and Clyde attended the Hartland Academy. No more of a student than Margaret, Clyde left Hartland Academy for Shaw Business College and business school for politics.

Blessed with an unusually pleasing personality and a persuasive style of speaking, Clyde began discussing political concerns with customers at his father's store. Lawyer Bill Brown said that at seventeen Clyde knew more about the tariff than most adults and would argue for a high tariff while filling a customer's order. During family meals, Skowhegan photographer Lyndon Huff observed Clyde arguing politics with his father. One night Clyde would speak as a Democrat, and the next night he would argue as a Republican. Rather than play baseball, skate, or go to dances, Clyde studied political issues as he had never studied in school and began his first campaign at age twenty-two for state representative. No one expected him to win against his experienced opponent, but Clyde had a bicycle, which he rode all over his district to talk to voters. With notable energy and enthusiasm he talked of putting his campaign posters "on the pig and the jersey cow" while his confident opponent did not bother to campaign.²⁷ Clyde won a surprise victory and in 1899 found himself the youngest member of the Maine House of Representatives. Clyde served two terms in the house with little impact and in 1903 chose not to run again, accepting instead a position as superintendent of schools.

In 1905 he reentered politics as a candidate for sheriff of Somerset County. Prohibition was the controversial context of the election, and Clyde, who never used alcohol or tobacco, promised to enforce Maine's law "without fear or favor."²⁸ With prohibition laws since 1846, Maine had pioneered regulation of liquor in the United States, and Clyde's first speech in the legislature had been in opposition to resubmitting temperance to the public for vote and was for enforcement instead. In Somerset County enforcement meant closing the flourishing open bars that flouted the law, and with twenty-five more votes than the presumably entrenched Democratic incum-

bent Clyde was elected. At twenty-nine the youngest sheriff ever elected in Somerset County, Clyde seized the largest quantity of liquor in county history: twenty-two barrels of hard cider, two quarts each of gin, whiskey, and alcohol, and seventy-five gallons of wine.

Since Skowhegan is the county seat of Somerset County, Clyde Smith moved there when he was elected sheriff. He lived on High Street across from Edward Page, the president of First National Bank, owner of significant northern lumber interests, and one of the most influential men in town. The two became close friends, and Page became Clyde's mentor. He saw Clyde as "a young man who was going places" and encouraged his daughter, Edna, and Clyde to marry.²⁹ On 17 April 1908 when Clyde was thirty-two years old, he married Edna and continued as sheriff until 1909. Then he became involved in several business ventures: lumber, autos, real estate, and banking among them. Clyde and Edna also bought a controlling interest in the *Somerset Independent* on 19 May 1909 and later renamed it the *Independent-Reporter*. In 1913 Roland Z. Patten bought the paper from Clyde but left him one share in the company and the title of president.

While Clyde prospered financially, his marriage deteriorated. By several accounts a beautiful and kind woman, Edna never had children with Clyde and separated from him in 1913. Their divorce, apparently a bitter one that estranged Clyde from the Page family, especially Edna's brother, Blin Page, was final on 27 January 1914. Persistent and widespread local gossip was that the marriage failed because Clyde was a "ladies' man," a phrase used by several Skowhegan residents, although others more bluntly referred to his "womanizing" and "skirt chasing." "Very suave and very smooth," "a very, very attractive figure," and "admired by women" were common observations made about Clyde Smith. He was known to have "kept company" with several women. "I guess nobody would dispute that if they knew anything about him at all," Lyndon Huff said.³⁰ Divorce was rare in early twentieth-century America and carried palpable stigma. More deleterious in its effects on women than men, certainly divorce would have required significant cause for Edna to have risked social ostracism.

Clyde's prurient predilections did not harm him politically, and there are those who maintain that the titillation of sexual innuendo had a positive political effect. Whatever the undocumented truth, Clyde Smith was elected first selectman in Skowhegan the next year, 1915, and held this foremost town position until 1932. Since Canaan's first town meeting in 1788, Skowhegan had elected selectmen to administer the community's business. Along with fence viewers, tree wardens, and as overseers of the poor, selectmen reported to interested citizens at the most democratic of American institutions, the town meeting. As first selectman Clyde presided at the meetings, which were held at the Opera House after a 1904 fire destroyed the original town hall, Coburn Hall. Renowned as "the smoothest talker that you ever heard" and "a beautiful speaker," Clyde put on a good

show for the town folks as well as efficiently doing his job. During the meetings he stayed on the left corner of the stage, and "anything that came up, he had to explain it," one Skowhegan resident recalled. "He had a powerful voice and it was a good voice. You could hear him very clearly. . . . He knew the ropes and he knew how to carry everything out and carry everything on."³¹

Reportedly Clyde also carried on more flagrantly than before with women. His office was in the Opera House, and he was said to use the dressing rooms upstairs from the theater for assignations. Women could come and go from the rear of the building by using the back stairs. Once when Clyde was up for reelection as selectman, a citizens' group, presumably led by Blin Page, circulated a list of women with whom Clyde was believed to have had affairs. Instead of denying the charge, Clyde walked into the loud, packed town meeting and said that it was all true, of him as well as of the men who opposed him. He was reelected.

Margaret Chase was an innocent sixteen year old when Clyde first talked his way into her life and heart. When she was seventeen, he offered her what most appealed: a better-paying job. The selectmen needed a part-time assistant to record tax assessments in the town books and would pay twelve dollars a week, more than double her salary at the telephone company. Because the work had to be done during the day, Clyde arranged with the high school principal for Margaret to take her typing and shorthand classes in the evening at night school. "Talk about your experiences," Smith said. "That was one. I learned a great deal about politics in those days."³² Clyde and the other two selectmen, an elderly Methodist deacon, Judge E. D. Packard, and a short, stout Franco-American, William Demo, went all over Skowhegan, by the early 1900s a town of over five thousand, and personally assessed property. Then they discussed their findings and had Margaret record their consensus. For about six months during her senior year and the following summer, Margaret learned about real estate, taxes, and budgeting and observed the political process from a rare vantage point. "Mr. Smith was very popular," Smith concluded. "A great many people came in and talked with him."³³

By her own account Margaret learned little in high school. "All I was told from the time I went to kindergarten was that I had to go to school so that I could get my diploma," Smith lamented. "Nobody said why I had to get my diploma," except that it would lead to a better job. Margaret thought of school as a "necessary evil; it was like serving so much time in prison," and she "resented going to school." During her freshman and sophomore years, Margaret took the regular curriculum of English with Dorothy Elliott, mathematics, botany, language, and her downfall, ancient history with Gladys Wilson. The latter, Smith vividly recalled, was "a young, attractive, very bright woman" who was herself a graduate of Skowhegan High School and Colby College. "I never thought she was much of a history teacher. There