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# THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF WORK: THE EARLY LIFE OF SENATOR MARGARET CHASE SMITH<sup>1</sup>

BY JEANNETTE W. COCKROFT

*Contrary to the conventional narrative of Margaret Chase Smith's life, her public career did not begin with her 1930 marriage to politician Clyde H. Smith. By the time of that marriage, she was already an experienced political leader and an accomplished professional. Her transformation from an uneducated, working-class girl to an ambitious, upwardly mobile, middle-class woman was the result of her employment at the local newspaper, the Somerset County Independent-Reporter, and her subsequent involvement in the Business and Professional Women's Club. The author received her Ph.D. in history from Texas A&M University and is an associate professor of history and political science at Schreiner University in Kerrville, Texas.*

**W**ORK HAS the power to transform lives. In the case of Republican Congresswoman and Senator Margaret Chase Smith, employment as a young woman at her local newspaper, the *Somerset County Independent-Reporter*, had allowed her to develop the skills and contacts needed to become a national political figure. The newspaper was important to Somerset County life in the 1920s, and working there played a formative role in her political career. During the years she was a newspaper employee, Margaret moved beyond being simply a working-class girl and became a confident, professional woman. Her involvement with the most significant institution of her rural community, in turn, nurtured her participation in the clubwomen's movement of the early twentieth century. As a result of her experiences in the 1920s as a newspaperwoman and a clubwoman, Margaret Chase's life was irrevocably changed. The expansion of her intellectual horizon and professional opportunities laid the foundation for a dynamic public career that predated her marriage to Clyde H. Smith in 1930.

Participation in the women's club movement provided both an



Margaret Chase as an infant, pictured with her parents, Carrie Matilda Murray and George Emery Chase. Margaret was the couple's eldest daughter. Carrie worked a variety of jobs over the years, while George worked briefly as a waiter, and then as a local barber in Skowhegan. Courtesy of the Margaret Chase Smith Library.

opportunity for education and the creation of a network of women that supported Margaret for much of her professional life. The clubwomen's movement of the early twentieth century also shaped Margaret's rationale for her move into the male-dominated sphere of electoral politics. Although throughout her life she vehemently denied being a feminist, Margaret Chase Smith embraced the late nineteenth century social housekeeping arguments that energized the clubwomen's movement. She accepted their assumptions about the moral superiority of women, as well as their arguments about the unique public contributions to be made by women moving into electoral politics. While rejecting the notions of total gender equality that would become the defining characteristic of the second wave of the women's movement at mid-century, her colleagues in the clubwomen's movement defined feminism in terms of female essential nature and superiority. They conceptualized the notion of feminism in the same way that women in the first wave of the women's movement had understood the term. Within this context, all of these women, including Margaret Chase Smith, were feminists.

Before there was Margaret Chase Smith, United States senator, there was Margaret Madeline Chase, the eldest daughter of George Emery Chase and Carrie Matilda Murray. Margaret was born on December 14, 1897, at the Murray homestead in Skowhegan, Maine, a mill town in the central part of the state and the seat of Somerset County government. Her parents were struggling blue-collar laborers. Her father, George, worked for a time as a waiter, but later became a local barber. The family could not survive on his meager salary and Margaret's mother, Carrie, did a number of jobs over the years to sustain her growing family. At various times, she worked as a clerk at the local five and dime store, waited tables at a hotel near the courthouse, and sometimes worked in the local shoe factory as a fancy stitcher.<sup>2</sup>

The happy, yet serious, Margaret Chase showed more interest in the discussions of adults than in the frivolities of childhood. She was also a very proud child, meticulous about her grooming and particularly fussy about her shoes.<sup>3</sup> She refused to make the short walk into town wearing an apron and insisted on a clean dress for both her and her doll whenever calling on an adult friend in the neighborhood.<sup>4</sup> Early in life she became aware of her family's marginal financial circumstances. She had also clearly assimilated the attitude of her mother that poverty provided no excuse for slothfulness.<sup>5</sup> Such awareness likely fueled an independence in Margaret that drove her to search for a more prosperous future for herself. For a girl from a blue-collar family that could not afford college, employment offered the most realistic avenue of advancement.



As a young woman, Margaret had a brief stint as a waitress at the Coburn Hotel in downtown Skowhegan. The hotel was located near the county offices and many lawyers and businessmen ate lunch there, but her wages and tips were generally low. Courtesy of the Margaret Chase Smith Library.

The now legendary story of twelve-year-old Margaret asking for a job at Green Brothers, the local five and dime store, provides the earliest record of her search for employment.<sup>6</sup> The proprietor turned her away the first time because she could not reach the store shelves. However, by age thirteen, the tenacious young girl had grown enough to reach the shelves.<sup>7</sup> She returned to the store, which promptly hired her for Saturday evenings. She later worked full days on Saturdays and, in time, during school vacations, at the salary of \$3.50 a week.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to her experience as a sales clerk, Margaret held a variety of other service jobs during her years in public school. For example, she briefly waited on tables at the Coburn Hotel in downtown Skowhegan. Although the hotel was near the county offices and was often frequented by lawyers and businessmen, the job paid little and tips for a new waitress were paltry.<sup>9</sup> Margaret also tried serving dinner and washing dishes in the homes of wealthy professionals in the area, but this work, too, paid poorly. After a short period of time, her mother made her quit her job as a domestic. She could not justify Margaret's working for the exploitive wage of five cents an hour.<sup>10</sup>

Once in high school, Margaret worked nights as a telephone

switchboard operator for the local Maine Telephone and Telegraph office. Later, after her high school graduation and a brief stint as a teacher in a rural one-room school house, she returned to work for the phone company.<sup>11</sup> As a telephone operator she came into contact with Skowhegan selectman Clyde H. Smith. When she was a senior in high school, he recommended Margaret for a position as a clerical assistant in the town office during tax assessment season.<sup>12</sup> The temporary position furnished full-time employment and required special arrangements for night and weekend classes for Margaret to graduate from high school in the spring of 1916.

Although these jobs provided short-term financial gain and escalating independence for Margaret, none of them offered much of a future. They offered little, if any, financial security and no potential for social mobility. Most importantly, though, none of these jobs opened up the opportunities for personal growth and skill development necessary to prepare an ambitious young woman such as Margaret for more challenging employment. In the long run, these dead-end jobs could not quell Margaret's restless and ambitious spirit.

Margaret's life changed dramatically in 1919 when she began working for the local newspaper, the *Independent-Reporter*. The paper's owner, Roland T. Patten, who knew her reputation as a bright and conscientious employee, lured her away from the telephone company with a significant salary increase. Over the course of the eight years that she worked for the newspaper, that salary increase became the least significant factor shaping Margaret's future. The *Independent-Reporter* was one of the county's oldest papers and had the largest circulation of any rural weekly in New England.<sup>13</sup> Her time on the staff of the newspaper put her at the center of Somerset County life.

In addition to printing the newspaper, the newspaper office also served as a sales agency for the Royal Typewriter Company, Kennebec Canoes and Boats, and the Sundstrand Adding Machine Company. Office staff also provided customized stenographic services for local businesses and ran an employment agency that provided free advertisements for both prospective employers and employees. The newspaper sponsored a free summer board service that matched inquiries from summer tourists with local families interested in lodging temporary boarders.<sup>14</sup> Thus, for the first time, Margaret Chase became part of the white-collar work force. She interacted with the business and political elite of Skowhegan and the surrounding areas not as a subordinate, but as a professional. She dressed more like them, spoke more like them, and related to them as an equal to be valued for her expertise rather than merely for her labor.



Margaret Chase's graduation picture from Skowhegan High School. During her high school years, Margaret worked at the Maine Telephone and Telegraph office and also met her future husband, Clyde H. Smith. Courtesy of the Margaret Chase Smith Library.

She also learned the newspaper business. She worked in nearly every department and learned the basic techniques of advertising and public relations.<sup>15</sup> Over time, she believed she had become quite a proficient newspaperwoman. In fact, she noted years later in her autobiography that the newspaper won an award during her time as circulation manager.<sup>16</sup> Her interest in the newspaper business also extended to learning to collect the news. She was eager to learn and, by her own admission, was always cognizant of what was going on in the area.<sup>17</sup> But, she never felt she was able to write the news. "I could collect the news, but I couldn't write it," she admitted. "I always had everybody going to Waterville shopping and coming back again. I couldn't vary the sentences."<sup>18</sup> Eventually Margaret did learn to write the news. From 1949 to 1954, she wrote her own syndicated newspaper column, "Washington and You."<sup>19</sup>

Working for the newspaper not only expanded Margaret's repertoire of marketable skills but also enlarged her worldview. The need to fill the



The staff of the *Independent-Reporter* in 1925. Margaret is pictured second from the right. Margaret worked for the newspaper from 1919 to 1927. While working at the *Independent-Reporter*, Margaret transformed into a confident, professional woman. Courtesy of the Margaret Chase Smith Library.

paper each week with relevant stories and advertisements forced Margaret to become familiar not only with the salient issues of the immediate area but also with issues of state and national import. In a professional sense, her experiences at the *Independent-Reporter* turned Margaret's traditional notions about the public role of blue-collar women upside down. As an employee at the local newspaper from 1919 to 1927, Margaret had the opportunity to transcend the stereotypes of female domesticity she had learned from her mother. Instead, she learned that a young, single woman without a college education could create for herself a fulfilling and challenging white-collar career in a man's world. In addition, Margaret's involvement in the women's club movement also facilitated her burgeoning career.

Although no scholarly consensus exists regarding the politicizing impact of work on women's lives, Margaret Chase likely felt at least some of the frustrations associated with the feminization of office work in the 1920s.<sup>20</sup> Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, *Independent Woman* magazine, the official publication of the National Federation of Business and



Professional Women's Clubs (NFBPW), explored a variety of problems relating to the integration of women into male-dominated work places. These problems included the existence of gender discrimination in the work place, the relative lack of opportunities in urban versus rural areas, and the difficulty in striking an appropriate balance between femininity and professionalism.<sup>21</sup> As a young woman striving to advance herself in a professional context for which she had little education and no female role models, Margaret certainly confronted these issues. Margaret Chase's time on the staff of the *Independent-Reporter* clearly marked a turning point in her public development. The experience presented her with opportunities not only for professional development but also for political development. In a 1988 interview with Bill Tush of the Cable News Network (CNN), Senator Margaret Chase Smith described herself in this period as a "girl about town": an affable, extroverted, curious young woman who took full advantage of all the possibilities created by her emerging career and of the considerable opportunities opened to her in the Maine club movement.<sup>22</sup>

The women's club culture that Margaret Chase embraced during her years as a newspaperwoman continued to be a vibrant and significant force, despite the emergence of an alternative model of women's political activity embodied by the Nineteenth Amendment, which granted voting rights to women in the United States. Suffrage and the concomitant access to electoral politics did not displace the older paradigm of women's moral influence in the public arena. Middle-class women in the late nineteenth century attempted to ameliorate the worst elements of industrialization through the creation of voluntary organizations, such as the General Federation of Women's Clubs. Rooted in traditional notions of female moral superiority and domesticity, these groups capitalized on these stereotypical views of women to create a rationale for their involvement in the male-dominated public space. This rationale, the notion of social housekeeping, asserted that women were responsible not merely for the well-being of their own families, but for the well-being of women and children everywhere. This responsibility thus led women into a variety of reform efforts, including the temperance and women's suffrage movements.

Even with the achievement of suffrage in the 1920s, traditional notions of domesticity continued to legitimate women's political activities even as an increasing number of women lived lives contrary to those stereotypes.<sup>23</sup> Especially for young, unmarried women like Margaret Chase, the club movement's paradigm of social housekeeping created a readily identifiable space for public activity that electoral politics still did

not. Moreover, the club movement, unlike electoral politics, offered Margaret and others like her new opportunities for education and camaraderie.

Portland, the state's largest and most cosmopolitan city, was the heart of Maine clubwomen's social and political activity. In 1889, its various clubs created the first municipal federation in the United States.<sup>24</sup> Later, in September 1892, Portland was the site of the nation's first meetings to create a statewide federation of women's clubs, the objective of which was "to bring together various women's literary and educational clubs of the state for mutual benefit and helpfulness to others."<sup>25</sup> Specific items on the agenda of that original two-day conference included lectures on two of the most pressing issues of the day for clubwomen: the importance of free libraries and the role of clubwomen in the modern age.<sup>26</sup>

The first annual meeting of the new Maine State Federation of Women's Clubs took place the following year at the Bethany Baptist Church in Margaret Chase's hometown of Skowhegan. The meeting included a lecture by Julia Ward Howe, author of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" and, in 1893, president of the Massachusetts Federation of Women's Clubs. At this meeting, the many interests of the state's women's clubs were consolidated into six fundamental departments: art, conservation, education, home life, international relations, and public affairs.<sup>27</sup> These categories, which mirrored the organizational structure of the national General Federation of Women's Clubs, encompassed the full range of social, cultural, and political interests in which clubwomen involved themselves in an attempt to improve their communities.<sup>28</sup>

Skowhegan played a prominent role in the early years of the state federation, boasting two of the charter organizations. One of these was the Skowhegan Women's Club, founded in November 1882.<sup>29</sup> Margaret Chase belonged to this club during the 1920s, although she never held office. The other Skowhegan club that was a charter member of the Maine State Federation of Women's Clubs, the Sorosis Club, continued in the 1920s as an exclusive literary and social club appealing mainly to young women.<sup>30</sup> As with the Skowhegan Women's Club, membership was apparently by invitation only, and the total number of members was carefully monitored to assure a high level of camaraderie. Mrs. Walter Ordway, who had earlier facilitated Margaret's acceptance into the Daughters of the American Revolution, encouraged the young professional woman to join the club. In 1922, she nominated Margaret for the club presidency.<sup>31</sup> Margaret served as president during the 1923-1924 term, but apparently retained no long-term involvement with the



Margaret was instrumental in bringing the 1925 National Federation of Business and Professional Women convention to Maine. She was a founding member of the local Skowhegan chapter and later rose to prominence at the state level. Here we see convention attendees disembarking from the train in Portland. Maine Historical Society/Maine Today Media Collections.

club.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, Margaret strongly believed that her involvement with the Sorosis Club contributed significantly to her personal and professional development.<sup>33</sup>

Margaret's limited involvement with both the Skowhegan Women's Club and the Sorosis Club in this period was probably the result of a concentration of her efforts on the establishment of the Skowhegan chapter of the Business and Professional Women's Club (BPW).<sup>34</sup> The National Federation of Business and Professional Women began during World War I as part of the larger American mobilization for the war. The original May 1918 conference under the auspices of the Young Women's Christian Association brought together a variety of business and professional representatives interested in creating a national committee to coordinate women's relief efforts during the war.

In the postwar period, the emphasis switched from coordinating

wartime relief work to building a grassroots organization and the creation of state federations. The first national meeting of the Federation of Business and Professional Women was held in St. Louis in July 1919. The National Federation evolved during the 1920s. In the early part of the decade, the NFBPW had been a strong proponent of social feminism and was an active member of the Women's Joint Congressional Committee, which served as a clearinghouse for the legislative efforts of its constituent groups. By 1925-1926, though, legislative setbacks to their lobbying efforts as well as internal debate over the merits of protective labor legislation for women stunted the organization's enthusiasm for social legislation. Thus, the group's emphasis slowly shifted to a less controversial set of issues dealing with the more narrowly focused concerns of professional and business women.<sup>35</sup>

In June 1922, Margaret Chase and other local women organized the Skowhegan BPW chapter.<sup>36</sup> Margaret was immediately chosen vice president. Shortly thereafter, because of the incapacitation of the president, she became the club president.<sup>37</sup> During her two terms as president, she took seriously the standards outlined in the National Federation's original constitution, which committed the group, "to elevate the standards for women in business and the . . . professions . . . to bring about a spirit of cooperation among business and professional women . . . and to extend opportunities . . . along lines of industrial, scientific and vocational activities."<sup>38</sup> During her brief term as president of the Sorosis Club, she had already begun serving her second term as the local BPW president. She also served on the club's state board of directors.<sup>39</sup> These activities suggest that she relished the challenge of creating something new and wanted to move beyond the social agenda of the existing local club structure to provide the practical resources and support necessary for the success of ambitious young business women.

The group procured a downtown clubhouse in which to hold their twice-monthly meetings as well as occasional luncheons. The area also served as a lunch facility for those members who worked in town and could not return home during their lunch hour.<sup>40</sup> To defray the cost of the suite, the women bought a second-hand piano and rented the space as a studio to a local music teacher.<sup>41</sup> Club meetings, held on alternate Tuesday evenings, included activities such as lectures and card playing. As president, Chase instituted a public speaking program in which club members spoke about their work and interests as a way of improving their public speaking skills. The club apparently met a significant local need. Within three years, the active membership grew to 125 dues-paying members.<sup>42</sup>



Margaret served a term as president of the Maine Federation of Business and Professional Women in the mid-1920s. As president she often traveled around the state and spoke at local BPW chapter meetings. Courtesy of the Margaret Chase Smith Library.

Chase soon became an important player in the state federation. By 1923, she was the state educational chairwoman for the federation. Two years later, she served as editor and business manager of the federation's first statewide magazine, *The Pine Cone*.<sup>43</sup> Margaret's hard work, attention to detail, and interest in people played an integral role in the state federation's success in hosting the 1925 National Federation of Business and Professional Women's convention in Portland.<sup>44</sup> Margaret's administrative success and her popularity among clubwomen across the state attracted the attention of the state leadership. During a meeting of the state board, the president of the organization, Miss Flora Weed, approached Chase about the possibility of her running for the state federation's presidency.<sup>45</sup> Weed, whose presidency had benefitted greatly from Chase's management of the federation magazine, believed that Chase's nonpartisan political stance would ensure the club's continuing growth.

The other candidate for the club presidency, Mrs. Jeanie Flood Krieger, was an active, conservative Republican. Weed believed Krieger's partisanship would stunt the federation's development.<sup>46</sup> According to her own recollection, Margaret at first protested that she was too young and inexperienced for such an important position.<sup>47</sup> Biographer Patricia Schmidt describes this protestation as a classic political ploy designed to enhance her desirability to Weed through the manipulation of a facade of humility and reluctance. After all, Chase had worked toward this goal, in Schmidt's view, since her first days in the BPW four years earlier.<sup>48</sup> However, Chase probably did feel unqualified for the state presidency. Despite her success as a local chapter president, she was still a young, relatively uneducated girl of modest means who had left Maine only twice in her life up until that point. The same deficiencies in her background that had made the job at the newspaper such a turning point and had made the founding of the local BPW such a challenge, now made the thought of assuming the state presidency unsettling.

She also worried about the logistics of serving as federation president while continuing to work full-time at the newspaper. She feared that her boss would not allow her to take the necessary time away from work. After consultation with her boss, Roland T. Patten, and encouragement from groups of club admirers, Margaret agreed to run and won the presidency during the 1926 state federation meeting in Houlton.<sup>49</sup> Patten delighted in the publicity Chase's new celebrity garnered for the newspaper. He had supported her previous club activities as a significant element of her professional development.<sup>50</sup> Despite this support for Margaret's pro-

fessional and personal development, he did refuse to give her paid time off to pursue her club responsibilities.

Margaret spent much of her year as president of the Maine State Federation of Business and Professional Women traveling across the state to address various local chapter meetings. Her talks focused on the importance of friendship, the encouragement of professional development among club members, and the value of association among women.<sup>51</sup> Margaret became a popular speaker on the club circuit and enjoyed the social opportunities, which ranged from small pot luck dinners to formal occasions at the governor's mansion. She even got the chance to travel to Des Moines, Iowa, for a national convention.<sup>52</sup> Years afterward, she acknowledged the importance of the administrative and professional education she received while serving the BPW. Speaking to the National Board of the National Federation of Business and Professional Women shortly after joining the U.S. Senate in 1949, she noted:

The BPW is largely responsible for putting me in the Senate...It taught me to develop cooperation. As an inclusive, rather than exclusive organization, it offered me a greater variety of personal contacts than other groups. It taught me efficiency in committee work and officer-ship...how to give and take in the participation of debates...the development of powers of expression, and the growth of ideas.<sup>53</sup>

Time away from her newspaper job had facilitated the preparation for her subsequent political career. She retained her membership in the Skowhegan chapter of the club for the rest of her life and felt a fierce loyalty to the BPW; many members of the local chapter supported her throughout her congressional career. She also expected the BPW as an organization to show her that same loyalty and was profoundly disappointed when it did not.<sup>54</sup>

By the end of 1927, Margaret Chase had reached a plateau in her professional and political development. She had evolved from a high school graduate with rudimentary clerical skills into a competent and ambitious professional woman. Her experience at the newspaper soon led her to even more lucrative and challenging professional positions, including her subsequent service, beginning in 1928, as treasurer of the Daniel E. Cummings New England Waste Process Company, a local woolen mill.

She had also become a feminist. Although throughout her life Margaret rejected the label as pejorative, by the late 1920s she did manifest the tenets described by historian Nancy F. Cott as the hallmarks of



Margaret, pictured here in 1948, owned this land on the Kennebec River in Skowhegan. Courtesy of the Margaret Chase Smith Library.

twentieth-century feminism.<sup>55</sup> Like many other clubwomen and professional women, Margaret understood that gender relations were socially, rather than biologically or divinely, ordained, and that women in solidarity could agitate for greater economic, educational, and political equality. But Cott also observes a lack of female consensus in the post-suffrage era on the question of what women wanted next. This lack of clarity obscured the true meaning of feminism. Women such as Margaret held the paradoxical view that a focus on the unique gifts of women could facilitate their entry into the male-dominated public sphere. Such a relational definition of feminism also permitted women to retain their traditional view of female deportment, which Margaret valued her entire life. As a young girl, she had meticulously cared for her shoes and dresses; as a professional woman, she wore high heels well into her nineties.

She once described a speaking engagement in honor of the female members of the Maine state legislature. Margaret wore “a beautiful gold lace over royal blue satin dress.”<sup>56</sup> In contrast, she characterized Gail Laughlin, a senior member of the legislature and first president of the



National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, as "a masculine looking woman [wearing] a long black skirt and a shirtwaist with her iron gray hair pulled back. In speaking she often took from her skirt pocket a large white handkerchief to wipe her face."<sup>57</sup>

Laughlin represented a very different type of woman. She became a member of the National Woman's Party, which employed aggressive political tactics, such as protest marches and hunger strikes, in the fight for suffrage. In the post-suffrage period, the group agitated for the Equal Rights Amendment. Laughlin thus symbolized a radical view of total gender equality dedicated to the eradication of any difference between women and men. As the woman's movement disintegrated in the post-suffrage period, this radical egalitarianism became the one most closely identified as feminist. When Margaret and others like her rejected the feminist label, they were not disavowing the value of common experience and collective action. Rather, they were avoiding identification with connotations of mannishness, which they believed would diminish both their personal and corporate power.

By the late 1920s, Margaret Chase had experienced tremendous personal and professional growth. Not only had she become a confident and mature businesswoman, she had also embarked on the creation of an impressive public career and an extensive political network within the context of the Maine BPW. Having already served on the Skowhegan Republican Committee, Margaret moved upward in the next few years. She served on the county committee, as a delegate to the party's district convention, and, in time, became a member of the Republican State Committee. Although her 1930 marriage to accomplished Maine politician Clyde H. Smith further expanded her political horizons into the very heart of the state's electoral politics, Margaret entered that relationship as a significant and accomplished public figure in her own right. That accomplishment was rooted in her years of employment by her hometown newspaper, the *Somerset County Independent-Reporter*, and her work in various women's clubs, especially the BPW.

#### NOTES

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Rural Heritage Institute, Sterling College, Craftsbury Common, Vermont, June 10-15, 2008.
2. "Margaret," anecdotes file, Margaret Chase Smith Library Center (hereafter MCSLC), Skowhegan, Maine.
3. "Interview of Mrs. Agnes Lamore Staples," anecdotes file, MCSLC.

4. "Interview of Mrs. Agnes Lamore Staples," anecdotes file, MCSLC.
5. "Margaret"; "Interview of Mrs. Agnes Lamore Staples," both in anecdotes file, MCSLC.
6. "Margaret," anecdotes file, MCSLC.
7. Frank Graham, Jr., *Margaret Chase Smith: Woman of Courage* (New York: John Day Company, 1964), p. 20.
8. "Employment," anecdotes file, MCSLC. Historian Julia Kirk Blackwelder argues that the expansion of clerical opportunities and the concomitant decline in manufacturing jobs for native-born white women at the beginning of the twentieth century was symptomatic of a basic realignment within the American economy. As job creation in the manufacturing sector stagnated, the white-collar, retail sector boomed and created a variety of new employment opportunities for middle-class white women. Because of their command of the English language, these women could readily take advantage of the growing need for various sorts of clerical workers, such as retail store clerks, typists, and bookkeepers. Both Blackwelder and Sophonisba Breckinridge underscore the growing concentration of women in these emerging clerical fields during the years 1910-1930. Blackwelder in particular notes that this trend began the concentration of women in relatively low-paying clerical jobs, which extends across nearly the entire twentieth century. See Julia Kirk Blackwelder, *Now Hiring: The Feminization of Work in the United States, 1900-1995* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1997) and Sophonisba Breckinridge, *Women in the Twentieth Century: A Study of Their Political, Social and Economic Activities* (1933: Reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1972).
9. "Employment," anecdotes file, MCSLC.
10. "Margaret," anecdotes file, MCSLC.
11. Some confusion exists about exactly what function Margaret performed when she returned to the phone company. According to the anecdote entitled "Employment," she worked in the business office. In her biography of Smith, Patricia Schmidt corroborates this. On the other hand, Janann Sherman says that Margaret was unable to get a clerical position with the phone company and that after two years as a switchboard operator, she took a job with the local newspaper. Sherman bases this view on an October 1986 interview with Margaret Chase Smith. Finally, Frank Graham claims that Margaret worked on the telephone switchboard for only six weeks and then took a clerical position in the telephone office. See Patricia Schmidt, *Margaret Chase Smith: Beyond Convention* (Orono, ME: University of Maine Press, 1996); Janann Sherman, *No Place for a Woman: A Life of Senator Margaret Chase Smith* (Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000); Frank Graham Jr., *Margaret Chase Smith*.
12. "Margaret," anecdotes file, MCSLC.
13. *Concerning The Independent-Reporter and its Newspaper and Job Printing Equipment* (n.p., n.d.).
14. See *Concerning The Independent-Reporter and its Newspaper and Job Printing Equipment*. The practice was apparently fairly common in this period before the widespread availability of motels and overnight camps. For more details, see "Margaret Takes Tourists-1930s," anecdotes file, MCSLC.
15. Graham, *Margaret Chase Smith*, p. 26.
16. Margaret Chase Smith, *Declaration of Conscience*, ed. William C. Lewis, Jr. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1972), p. 364.

17. Graham, *Margaret Chase Smith*, p. 26.

18. Graham, *Margaret Chase Smith*, p. 26.

19. In the 1940s, Smith wrote a weekly Washington column for Maine papers. From April 1949 to July 1954, she wrote a syndicated column for United Features Syndicate that ran five days a week in thirty American cities. Although the column appeared mostly in small city newspapers, it was also carried by the *Philadelphia Bulletin*. Smith ceased writing shortly after her victory over Robert L. Jones in the 1954 Republican primary for the U.S. Senate; she attributed the cessation to the fatigue of that grueling primary.

20. For the debate on the politicizing impact of employment on women, see Kathleen Gerson, *Hard Choices: How Women Decide about Work, Career, and Motherhood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Ethel Klein, *Gender Politics: From Consciousness to Mass Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984); Eileen L. McDonagh, "To Work or Not To Work: The Differential Impact of Achieved and Derived Status upon the Political Participation of Women," *American Journal of Political Science* 26, no.2 (May 1982): 280-297; Lise Togeby, "Political Implications of Increasing Numbers of Women in the Labor Force," *Comparative Political Studies* 27, no. 2 (July 1994): 211-240; Sarah Slavin Schramm, "Women and Representation: Self-Government and Role Change," *Western Political Quarterly* 34, no.1 (March 1981): 46-59; Kristi Anderson, "Working Women and Political Participation, 1952-1972," *American Journal of Political Science* 14, no. 3 (August 1975): 439-453. On Margaret specifically see Blackwelder, *Now Hiring*, p. 63.

21. A variety of articles in this period addressed the challenges facing business women. See Grace Srager, "Miss Broadway Answers Mrs. Babbit," *Independent Woman* 9, no.10 (October 1930): 414-415, 437-438; Catherine Oglesby, "The Smaller the Town, the Bigger the Chance," *Independent Woman* 9, no. 9 (September 1930): 356-357, 385; Carol Harding, "This Question of Discrimination," *Independent Woman* 9, no.7 (July 1930): 268-269, 292-293; Diana Kane, "Where Lies the Danger Zone?" *Independent Woman* 7, no. 5 (May 1928): 198-199, 237; Anne W. Armstrong, "Are Business Women Getting a Square Deal?" *Independent Woman* 7, no. 1 (January 1928): 4-5, 30, 46.

22. Margaret Chase Smith, "Margaret Chase Smith talks about her early life and training, about her husband Clyde Smith and about running for Congress in 1940 and staying until 1970," interview by Bill Tush, September 19, 1988, audiocassette, Cable News Network, Atlanta, Georgia.

23. Blackwelder, *Now Hiring*, pp. 66-80.

24. J.C. Croly, *The History of the Women's Club Movement in America* (New York: Henry G. Allen & Co., 1898), p. 523.

25. "History of the General Federation of Women's Clubs & Maine Federation of Women's Clubs," *Skowhegan Voice* (October 1995), p. 6, scrapbook 513, 36, MCSLC.

26. Croly, *History of the Women's Club Movement*, p. 524.

27. "History of the General Federation of Women's Clubs," MCSLC.

28. "History of the General Federation of Women's Clubs," MCSLC.

29. Louise Helen Coburn, "History of the Skowhegan Woman's Club," paper presented at the birthday dinner of the Skowhegan Woman's Club during the annual meeting of the Maine Federation of Women's Clubs, Lakewood, September 21, 1932, MCSLC.

30. "Sorosius Club training for later years," anecdotes file, MCSLC.
31. "Sorosius Club training for later years," anecdotes file, MCSLC.
32. "History of the General Federation of Women's Clubs," MCSLC; "Miss Chase New President of Sorosius," newspaper article, May 3, 1925, scrapbook 9, 7, MCSLC.
33. "Sorosius Club Training For Later Years," anecdotes file, MCSLC.
34. For the early history of the NFBPW, see Geline MacDonalD Bowman and Earlene White, *A History of the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Inc., 1919-1944 inclusive* (New York: National Business and Professional Women's Clubs, n.d.); Ruth Sargent, *Gail Laughlin, ERA's Advocate* (Portland, ME: House of Falmouth Publishers, 1979).
35. See Stanley J. Lemons, *The Woman Citizen: Social Feminism in the 1920's* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1973).
36. "Skowhegan BPW Club Currently Observing 25th Anniversary of National Business Women's Week," newspaper article, October 2, 1952, scrapbook vol. 117, 128, MCSLC.
37. Skowhegan BPW Club Currently Observing 25th Anniversary of National Business Women's Week," newspaper article, October 2, 1952, scrapbook vol. 117, 128, MCSLC.
38. Bowman and White, *A History of the National Federation*, p. 11.
39. "Miss Chase New President of Sorosius," newspaper article, May 3, 1925, Scrapbook vol. 9, 7, MCSLC.
40. "Organization Memberships," anecdotes file, MCSLC.
41. "Organization Memberships," anecdotes file, MCSLC.
42. "Organization Memberships," anecdotes file, MCSLC.
43. "Skowhegan Club Boasts Busy Fifty Years," *Brevities* (Spring 1972), Maine State Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs Collection, Box 747, Special Collections, Raymond H. Fogler Library, University of Maine, Orono (hereafter UMO).
44. Schmidt, *Margaret Chase Smith*, p. 68.
45. Some discrepancy exists in the Smith anecdotes concerning the date of this meeting. According to the "Organization Memberships" anecdote, the year is 1925; according to the anecdote "Flora Weed—BPW Convention," the year is 1926. Both are in anecdotes file, MCSLC.
46. "Organization Memberships," anecdotes file, MCSLC.
47. "BPW State President," anecdotes file, MCSLC; "Flora Weed—BPW Convention," anecdotes file, MCSLC.
48. Schmidt, *Margaret Chase Smith*, p. 69.
49. In time, Patten became a lifelong friend of Margaret Chase Smith and her husband Clyde H. Smith and served for many years in the congressional offices of both.
50. "Roland Taylor Patten," anecdotes file, MCSLC; "Flora Weed—BPW Convention," anecdotes file, MCSLC.
51. See "Flora Weed—BPW Convention," anecdotes file, MCSLC; "Organization Memberships," anecdotes file, MCSLC.

52. Smith remembered attending two national conventions during her presidency: one in Des Moines, Iowa, and the other in West Baden, Indiana. See “Organization Memberships,” anecdotes file, MCSLC.

53. “Our BPW Senator,” *Independent Woman* 28 (February 1949): 59.

54. There were several specific incidents in which Margaret Chase felt betrayed by the BPW and there were many other, similar instances throughout her career. See “Organization Memberships,” anecdotes file, MCSLC.

55. Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), pp. 4-7.

56. “Organization Memberships,” anecdotes file, MCSLC.

57. “Organization Memberships,” anecdotes file, MCSLC.