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New England Genealogies: The Life and Writings of Mary Ellen Chase

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**NEW ENGLAND GENEALOGIES: THE LIFE AND
WRITINGS OF MARY ELLEN CHASE**

By

William Orin Chesley

B.A. University of Maine at Machias, 1999

A THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

(in English)

The Graduate School

The University of Maine

May, 2003

Advisory Committee:

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By William Orin Chesley

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Benjamin Friedlander

An Abstract of the Thesis Presented
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Mary Ellen Chase, one of the most popular American authors of the twentieth century, was born in Blue Hill, Maine in 1887. Her career as a writer spanned the period between 1909, when she left Maine to teach in the mid-West, and her death in 1973. Much of her literature was influenced by her early life in Blue Hill and by the various members of family. This thesis looks at the historical, biographical, and genealogical factors that gave impetus to a prolific literary output and won her a place among the leading Humanist writers in American literature during the middle of the last century.

Historically, Chase's works dealing exclusively with Maine are based upon nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century life in small seacoast villages. This was the life into which Chase was born, and the various villages created within her fiction depend upon the history of Blue Hill for their being. To understand and appreciate Chase's writing, one must first understand the history

of her hometown. This thesis explores the early settlement of Blue Hill, the old-time Puritan traditions handed down from the early settlers to their descendants, and the rise and fall of the shipping industry in that locality. These three subjects are of major importance to Chase's overall literary canon.

In term of her own biography, Chase's early life, the period from her birth to her removal to the Mid-West, plays a major role in the construction of her literature. Her autobiographical works, of course, are solely based upon her perceptions of her family's life. But, the stories told to her as a child by the various members of her extended family also influenced her fiction. Her early meetings with Maine authors, Laura Richards and Sarah Orne Jewett, solidified her own desire to write stories about New England life and people as she knew them during her Maine childhood. Her religious up-bringing in the Congregational church and her New England education in the classics of Greece and Rome also found artistic outlets in and through her writing.

Genealogy was also of considerable interest to Mary Ellen Chase, and her Maine works reflect this interest. As a Humanistic writer, she believed that each generation had the potential to rise above the ones preceding it. She saw this trend in her own genealogy, and she sought to create characters that, despite setbacks beyond their own control, had the fortitude and perseverance to stay their course and retain their dignity in the midst of often trying circumstances. For the creation of characters who exhibit such traits, she turned to her own pedigree for valuable information. Her paternal grandmother, Eliza Ann (Wescott) Chase, and other Maine women, Caroline (McFarland) Lord, Elizabeth (Hibbard) Darling,

and Mary Ann Fossett, all have evident places in her Maine writings. The character of Mary Peters is based upon her paternal aunt, Mary (Dyer) Chase Herrick; the character of the elder Silas Crockett is based upon her paternal grandfather, Captain Melatiah Kimball Chase, and the character of Thomas Winship is based upon a maternal great-uncle, Thomas M. Lord. The genealogical connections and literary / spiritual influences of these people are explained in light of what Chase and others actually recorded about them.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated in loving memory

to my maternal grandparents,

Freemont Amasa Towle

May 26, 1919—January 3, 1992

and

Kathryn Lorraine (Dunn) Towle

June 2, 1924—February 25, 1996,

through whom, I, like the Ancient Psalmist

and Mary Ellen Chase, may say with

all conviction and certainty that “the

lines are fallen to me in pleasant places;

yea, I have a goodly heritage.”

PREFACE

My high school history teacher once told me, "If we would but take time to reflect upon our lives, one year, or even one moment, out of all those allotted to us might stand out as truly unique, a turning point where one part of life ends and another begins. Keep yourself open to all possibilities, Bill, and you will recognize the turning points in your life when they come." This simple statement, spoken in good counsel shortly before I graduated high school in 1983, has sustained me throughout my subsequent life. I have tried to anticipate and recognize the turning points before they have arrived—always hoping that the new phase arriving will be better and more fulfilling than the old one just passing away. This thesis is one such turning point—the beginning of a new phase in my life for which I am especially grateful. After years of research and study, I now have opportunity to offer to the world at large my views on the life and writings of Mary Ellen Chase.

The trickiest and most subtle of turning points, of course, are always more recognizable in retrospect. Hindsight, we are told, is most often twenty-twenty, and I certainly believe this tritest of all expressions to be the truest of all maxims. In looking back, I recognize two turning points that shaped my perceptions of Mary Ellen Chase, and these perceptions will, without a doubt, influence the thought behind and the writing of this thesis.

Mary Ellen Chase died in Northampton, Massachusetts, on July 28, 1973. She was eighty-six, and I was nearly eight. Her death would have meant little or nothing to me in those childhood days had it not been for my maternal

grandmother, Kathryn (Dunn) Towle. Grammy, an avid reader and a Chase fan since her own childhood in the 1930s, read the late author's lengthy obituary in the *Bangor Daily News* just as I arrived to "help" her roll out piecrust in her tidy, little kitchen overlooking the lake in her backyard. Until that point in my life, I had had no idea who or what Mary Ellen Chase might have been, and her death, although it subdued my grandmother's usually cheerful disposition on that particular summer morning nearly thirty years ago, was like all other deaths I had heretofore known during my slender life. Death had robbed my grandmother of yet another family member or old friend—leaving her to grieve still another dissolution of those ties that bound her to a past that I could only imagine but not fully comprehend. I did not realize that my grandmother had never personally met this Mary Ellen Chase person, but as we talked, and as I asked questions, Grammy patiently explained that she knew Mary Ellen Chase only through the books and magazine articles the author had written. Dawning slowly upon my young mind was the perception that Mary Ellen Chase, whoever she had been, had become my grandmother's friend through the written word and the printed page. This was my very first introduction to Mary Ellen Chase, and the memory of that occasion—whether due to Grammy's sad expression as she read the newspaper, the morning sunlight playing on the lake below us, the aroma of fresh raspberries being prepared for pies, or the realization that authors, rare as they were in our own Maine neighborhood, were important people whom we could know and love through their books—has stuck with me from that day to this.

My next encounter with Mary Ellen Chase came in a more scholarly fashion. As a third-year student at the University of Maine at Machias, I enrolled in a Selected Maine Authors course where I was asked to read Chase's last novel, *The Lovely Ambition*. This was my first foray into the mind of that truly gifted and talented woman, and I could easily see why my grandmother had marked the author's passing with regret and sadness. Mary Ellen Chase's prose was as beautiful as it was clear and precise; her descriptions of Maine and Maine people were informed, realistic, and sympathetic. At this point, I found myself as enthralled with Chase as my grandmother had been fifty years before.

My own appreciation of Chase's writing, as I began reading everything I could find on, by, or about her, was solidified during that spring semester of 1987. In preparation for a paper I intended to write on Chase, I read and reread her autobiographical work entitled, *A Goodly Heritage*. *A Goodly Heritage*, Chase's reflection on life as it was lived in her native Blue Hill, Maine, in the waning days of the nineteenth century, touched me in a way few books ever have. Writing of "New England life and particularly of that life as it was experienced in the State of Maine," she made me look into a past that was as much mine as it was hers (Chase, *Heritage* 7). I, with an unquenchable interest in Maine history and family genealogy, began to look to her books for answers concerning my own goodly heritage. It has turned out, much to my surprise and pride, that I, with roots deeply imbedded in the rocky soil of New England, in general, and in Blue Hill, Maine, in particular, share with her a common background and heritage. My ancestry, arising from a certain Jonathan Darling, and his wife, Hannah (Holt)

Darling, natives of Andover, Massachusetts and early settlers of Blue Hill, finds its parallel with hers, and in several cases, our genealogical lines have fallen, crossed, become twisted, and now are forever intertwined in the most pleasant of places. Such is the matter of family lineage in old New England, and yet, this fact, more than any other single influence, has served as the beginning of my interest in Mary Ellen Chase's life and literary works.

If we can recognize the turning points in our own lives, then perhaps with a greater insight, we can recognize them in the lives of others. Mary Ellen Chase proves to be no exception. She had her own share of turning points in a life that spanned the better part of the last century. Her first, and perhaps most notable, turning point came in the year 1909.

1909 was a pivotal year for Chase, signifying the end of her circumscribed childhood on the Maine coast and the beginning of her life in the larger world. She graduated from the University of Maine with a Bachelor's degree in history, left her native Blue Hill for the fertile fields of the West, and found employment as a teacher in Spring Green, Wisconsin. That same year also marked the untimely and unfortunate demise of her literary mentor and ideal, Sarah Orne Jewett. And, it was also in 1909 that Mary Ellen Chase published her first literary work, "His Place on the Eleven," in *The American Boy* for which she received, for the first time in her life, money made by her writing. In this thesis, I will be chiefly concerned with Mary Ellen Chase's life until 1909, but I will not limit the scope of my discussion merely to the twenty-two years spanning from her birth in 1887 to her removal to the West. Although these twenty-two years provided

Chase with the necessary materials that would later enliven her Maine literature, she also needed both time and space in which to mature and grow as an artist. She, in short, required time to reflect upon her heritage and upbringing, time to put these reflections into some kind of greater historical perspective in order that her “accurate sketches of New England people and places” might prove to be of “interest to readers of like tradition and experience” (Chase, *Heritage*, 5). Therefore, I will draw in pertinent biographical information from her adult life as it relates to her past and to her heritage.

The best way in which to understand Mary Ellen Chase’s literary output, I believe, is to first understand her early life and the dynamics of her New England heritage. Chase, as I hope to show, was deeply interested in the New England experience. She proudly called herself both a product of New England and a native of Maine. It is not then surprising that her most notable works, in fiction, *Mary Peters*, *Silas Crockett*, and *The Edge of Darkness*, in autobiography, *A Goodly Heritage*, *A Goodly Fellowship*, and *The White Gate*, and in biography, *Jonathan Fisher: Maine Parson 1768—1847*, are all decidedly grounded in the traditions and past of New England. By her own acknowledgment, she embodied many of those New England traits handed down from her ancestors. She firmly believed in the importance of hard work, the resiliency of the human soul, and the idea that knowledge should be a desired end unto itself. She was, we should always remember, a direct descendant of the early families who made their way in 1762 from Essex County, Massachusetts, to what would eventually become known as the Blue Hill Peninsula. Her forebears, who in their own turn were

descendants of the Puritan families who sought religious refuge in the New World more than a century before their removal to the District of Maine, created the culture into which Chase was born. That culture, with its appreciation of family bloodlines, its almost fanatical reverence to the Calvinistic doctrines of the Congregational and Baptist churches, and its Puritan emphasis placed upon the importance of learning and education, continued to flourish during her formative years. She imbibed this culture, winnowing the grain from the chaff, and in the end, created memorable art. While other critics and scholars have commented on her indebtedness to her heritage, few, if any, have explored this important aspect of her writing in any great depth. Chase's familiar genealogy, which is concerned solely with her blood and spiritual connections to family and kindred, plays a major role in the construction of her literature; she writes about her family and its antecedents, and several of her most memorable fictional characters are quite obviously based upon her forebears. Using the literature cited above and drawing on other lesser-known Chase works, I intend to look at Mary Ellen Chase's works in light of her heritage—the biographical and genealogical factors that produced a prolific and varied literary canon consisting of thirty-five volumes of fiction, biography, autobiography and biblical studies together with innumerable articles, essays, and pamphlets.

Having said all of this, and hopefully pointing the way to an increased understanding of Mary Ellen Chase, I—at long last—begin.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION.....	ii
PREFACE.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	ix
Section	
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. BLUE HILL, MAINE—A BRIEF HISTORY.....	5
3. BIOGRAPHY.....	14
4. THE FAMILIAL GENEALOGIES.....	45
Chase/Wescott.....	46
Hinckley-Wood/Lord.....	51
5. THE LITERARY WORKS.....	58
The Autobiographies.....	61
The Maine Novels.....	110
6. CONCLUSION.....	248
WORKS CITED.....	252
BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR.....	257

INTRODUCTION

Genealogy, as defined by *Webster's New World Dictionary*, is "the science or study of family ancestry . . . pedigree [or] lineage" ("Genealogy"). This concise—and albeit nondescript—definition, unfortunately, says nothing at all about what is truly entailed in any valued genealogical study. Genealogy is a combination and culmination of many varied elements. By its very nature, genealogy must take into account the relationships existing between family lineage and a sense of history, vital statistics and an understanding of biography, and the movement of people from their localities of origin to their points of final destination. It is no wonder then that genealogy has become known in its simplest, and perhaps most colorful form, as the tracing of the proverbial family tree.

With its roots firmly planted in the soil of a common heritage, the family tree, or pedigree, stretches itself upward and outward infinitely. Genealogists—in an attempt to record and interpret family history—must make some distinctive evaluations about its unwieldy and metaphorical structure. They try to make sense of its leafy and sometimes indistinct umbrage, attaching proven facts to oral or written family traditions. They must seek to measure the girth of its trunk, climb its many branches, and take note how the various parts—from root to crown—make a strong and unified whole. Preparing a genealogy, therefore, can be a momentous undertaking and commitment—a task that is forever ongoing and never fully completed. As more ancestral information is revealed and becomes available, genealogists must spend their lifetimes scaling one or more of these family trees in an attempt to define and understand the lives of all those people who have come and gone before them. And, as they themselves will tell you, genealogy,

although a scholarly pursuit in many respects, can become an all-consuming passion and a labor of love.

Mary Ellen Chase possessed this reverential and devoted interest in genealogy. And, she did not hesitate to tell what she knew of her heritage. In “Down East Today,” Virginia Smith Hall, critiquing Chase’s Maine novel *Silas Crockett*, asserts that the author “has shown a great interest, like all New Englanders, in genealogy” (113). This is a very general statement to be sure, but Chase’s works—autobiographical, biographical, and fictional—*are* replete with genealogical references to early New England families and their origins, lives, and vocations. “She has traced, interestingly and realistically,” Hall goes on to say, “the characteristics from one generation down through to the . . . succeeding generations” (113). It was Chase, while visiting her mother in 1924, who first “suggested that someone . . . compile an accurate record of the Chase genealogy” (W. P. Hinckley). But, as her late brother, Edward Everett Chase, Jr., was fond of often pointing out, “Mary Ellen never let the truth stand in the way of a good story” (R. M. Chase). Genealogy, in and of itself, was not nearly as important to Chase as the literary possibilities these materials provided her.

According to Perry Westbrook, Chase, like fellow New England writers Sarah Orne Jewett, Dorothy Canfield Fisher, and Gladys Hasty Carroll, may be classified as an American Humanist. She believed that each subsequent generation, if given the proper “emotional and intellectual security,” could rise higher than the last (25). Through her writing, she sought and found “positive values in our national culture in a period when it [had] become intellectually unfashionable to find anything but negative values” (Westbrook 25). Chase regarded “humanity as possessing potentials of soul and mind

not found in the rest of organic or inorganic nature” (Westbrook 25). She found these “positive values” and these “potentials of soul and mind” within her own family, and she thus “recorded a confidence in the moral and spiritual resources of the American character” as *she* knew it (Westbrook 25). As a child, she was surrounded by the positive reminders of her family’s past, and later in life, she chose to mold and reshape these same raw materials to create art which gives “an account of the traditions behind the formation of New England life and thought” (Chase, “Novels” 16).

While this thesis deals with Mary Ellen Chase’s familial genealogy, or her family tree, this is not a genealogy—a study of family ancestry—in the strictest sense of the term. This is a literary study, and as such, I will use her biography and genealogy only as a historical means to a literary end. No exclusive research has yet been done on Chase’s lineage and the part it played in her particular style of Humanistic writing. Even Perry Westbrook, Chase’s first biographer, in his otherwise splendid and informative book, *Mary Ellen Chase*, offers but a fleeting, and very general, reference to the author’s genealogy and heritage in connection to her writing. He states that Chase traced “her descent back to settlers from Massachusetts who founded Blue Hill in the 1760’s; in her mother’s family was a tradition of preaching and school-teaching . . . on her father’s side, Miss Chase’s ancestors were seafarers of that far-traveled breed” (17-18). Given this very lackadaisical appraisal of Chase’s ancestry, I see a critical need for the kind of attention this particular study will provide. Chase saw within her own heritage “the positive [values which extend] . . . far back into American history” (Westbrook 25). In this study I will compare what is now known of Chase’s family tree with what she has written—trying to identify and define the actual persons and events on which so much of

her literature depends. To give an adequate historical perspective, I will begin my study by first presenting a brief but pertinent history of Chase's hometown, Blue Hill, Maine, and her connections to it. I will then discuss her early biography, the twenty-two years spanning from her birth in 1887 to her removal to the West in 1909. This seminal period in her life, as we will see from the materials borrowed from her three autobiographies, provided her with an ample knowledge of her heritage and the various branches of her family tree from which she later drew so much of her historical information. And, in conclusion, I will analyze and critique her Humanistic point of view as it is found in her three autobiographies and the first two of her three "novels about Maine," hopefully bringing together the earlier historical, biographical, and genealogical information I have here provided (Chase, "Novels" 14).

BLUE HILL, MAINE—A BRIEF HISTORY

Perry Westbrook, in his biography, *Mary Ellen Chase*, makes an astute and poignant observation of the writer and her art. “One must know something of Blue Hill,” he says, “if one is to understand Mary Ellen Chase’s feeling for it and her artistic debt to it” (18). This statement is, of course, true. Mary Ellen Chase and Blue Hill have become almost synonymous terms; each, in a certain sense, depends upon the other for definition and explication. Blue Hill, whether Chase mentions it by name or not, is evident in all her books set on the Maine coast. The town, together with its customs and its institutions, was deeply ingrained within Chase, and her inherent regard for Blue Hill is revealed throughout her writing. She borrows liberally from its past, its people, and its pride, and even “under faint disguise,” the town is recognizable to all who know it (Westbrook 18). And, a great many people know of Blue Hill simply because it is the birthplace and early home of its most noted daughter, the woman who, in so many respects, put the town and its people on the literary map—the late Mary Ellen Chase.

Perhaps the most recognizable feature about Mary Ellen Chase’s beloved Blue Hill is its pervading and yet very evident sense of its own history. Travelers—whether coming to Blue Hill for the first or the one-hundredth time, feel “these impressions” of a proud, New England past “as a matter of pleasurable fact” (Chase, “Hometown” 39). Blue Hill, as mentioned in the Preface to this thesis, was first settled in 1762, making the community, by Maine standards at least, a relatively old one. The town, one of the very first settled east of the Penobscot River just before the Peace of Paris brought the French and Indian Wars to a final close, takes its name from a large hill arising in the middle of the township. This tiny village, nestled between Blue Hill Mountain and the head of Blue

Hill Bay, is picturesque, and even in this modern time, retains much of its former New England charm and quaintness. Blue Hill is not unlike Sarah Orne Jewett's Dunnett's Landing, the fictional setting of that author's most famous work, *The Country of the Pointed Firs*. Here, as in Dunnett's Landing, whitewashed houses, shops, and churches, some dating to colonial times, hug the rugged and rocky terrain as it slopes abruptly and precariously toward the sea. Huge, old trees—elms, oaks, and maples planted a century or more ago—shade the winding streets which all run downhill to the tiny, inner harbor. Upland farms, now abandoned to alder thickets, hackmatack, steeplesbush, and wild blueberry bushes, still offer breath-taking vistas of the village below and the ever-changing sea beyond. The names found on the town's mailboxes, in many instances, match perfectly those inscribed upon the oldest tombstones in the town burial grounds, perhaps attesting to the fact that New England heritage and family lineage continue to be of importance to the roughly 2,400 persons who call Blue Hill home. Modern Blue Hill boasts a consolidated grammar school, a high school, a hospital, a public library, a historical society, six churches, and two museums; a world famous pottery studio and a dozen specialty shops, hardware stores, and eateries are clustered within the town's compact and tidy downtown. Judging from the town's ideal location and its scenic beauty, newcomers can at once understand what drew the original pioneers to its shores nearly two and a half centuries ago; they can just as easily understand why it has become in the last century a destination for tourists and artists alike. Blue Hill is—although far removed socially and chronologically from its humble beginnings—a living memorial to the “indefatigable energy and robust, unrelenting piety” of its founders and their immediate descendants (Chase, *Heritage* 19).

Originally known as Plantation #5, Blue Hill claims John Roundy and Joseph Wood, natives of Andover, Massachusetts, as its earliest founders. These two men, with other Andover “Persons Brought up to Husbandry and not having lands sufficient for themselves and sons,” petitioned the General Court at Boston on January 6, 1762, for the right to settle some wilderness “Land upon the Sea Coasts or Rivers” of eastern Maine (Candage 3). Roundy and Wood, apparently frustrated with the tedious proceedings of the General Court and wanting to get their new enterprises under way, did not wait until permission was granted. They removed to Plantation # 5 early in the spring of 1762, and squatted on “land not [their] own” (Chase, *Heritage* 17). In its final decision dated July 13, 1762, the General Court granted permission to the larger Andover group to make their settlements along Blue Hill Bay so long as they promised to settle “within six years . . . sixty good Protestant Families, and build sixty Houses”(Candage 5). This request seems to have been of no consequence to these would-be “lords of a beautiful but [as yet] unproductive coast;” for within three years of their arrival, Roundy and Wood were joined by several of their original Andover compatriots (Chase, *Heritage* 14). The original families, the “Woods, Roundys, [Darlings], Carletons, Parkers, Osgoods, Peterses, Candages, Holts, Hortons, and Hinckleys” in less than twenty years “had not only cleared arable land, made ‘Rhodes,’ and built their homes, but had formed neighboring settlements to which they lured other husbandmen from north of Boston” (Chase, *Heritage* 5). The new settlement was known by several names during the years immediately following its founding. New Andover, East Andover, Newport, and East Boston were all used successively and later abandoned. Blue Hill, then spelled Bluehill, was adopted and in use by the time of the first town meeting in 1785. The “neighboring

settlements” eventually became the towns now known as Penobscot, Sedgewick, Brooklin, Ellsworth, and Surry.

In addition to the initial provision that sixty families be settled within six years, these “good Protestant families” were also required to build a “suitable Meetinghouse for the public worship of God, and Settle a Learned Protestant Minister,” being sure “to make Provision for his comfortable and honorable Support” (Candage 5). In response to this edict, the early settlers founded a Congregational Church as early as 1772, and a small meetinghouse was erected sometime soon thereafter. But, due to “the hardships and exigencies of pioneer life,” a resident minister was not officially called until 1794 (Chase, *Heritage* 15).

The Reverend Jonathan Fisher, a native of New Braintree, Massachusetts and a graduate of Harvard, had filled the vacant pulpit of the Blue Hill Congregational Church for several summers before his final removal there in 1796. He was a devout man of the old-time Calvinistic persuasion, industrious, well educated, and incredibly community conscious. During his forty year ministry at Blue Hill, he helped to erect a new meetinghouse, cleared himself a farm, built a suitable parsonage with out-buildings, established an academy, helped to found a school of theology at Bangor, and instituted several organizations for the moral uplifting of the town. Fisher’s philanthropic works exerted a tremendous influence on the town for generations, and following the end of his official ministry in 1836, he did “not fail to give good private religious instruction” whenever and wherever the opportunity arose (Chase, *Fisher* 268). At the time of his death in 1847, the minister preaching his funeral sermon, a Reverend Stephen Thurston of Searsport, said, “ . . . he did much for the intellectual [and spiritual] cultivation of the

people, so that, in this respect, this town gained an early advance over most of the adjacent towns” (Chase, *Fisher* 279).

Fisher’s greatest problem while preaching in Blue Hill stemmed from the infiltration of certain undesirable religious influences into the community. As early as 1800, he put the itinerant and less educated Methodist preachers to rout and took great care that their “ancient Pelagian” and “Arminian heresies” did not gain a foothold among the members of his congregation (Chase, *Heritage* 18). He, it must be remembered, represented the old Massachusetts establishment, and he ““felt it to be his duty to . . . publicly state what he [believed] to be the Truth in opposition to error disseminated”” (Chase, *Heritage* 18). The “Truth,” as he called it, was that he, a New England Congregational parson, had a bound duty to protect and defend the governmentally supported, propagated, and controlled ““Established Church”” (Chase, *Fisher* 99). Religious inroads of any kind, he and his fellows feared, threatened the stability of a society defined by one hundred and seventy-five years of acceptable New England tradition. Fisher, however, fought a battle he could not win.

In 1803, Fisher’s close friend and fellow minister, Daniel Merrill of nearby Sedgewick, underwent a period of religious questioning that led to his ultimate conversion to the Calvinistic Baptist Church. Merrill and sixty of his church members, believing infant baptism to be erroneous, were re-baptized by immersion, and in a day, the Sedgewick Congregational Church transformed itself into the Sedgewick Baptist Church. This occurrence, unheard of and unparalleled at the time, had serious repercussions that threw Fisher and his church at Blue Hill into immediate turmoil. In a matter of weeks, several of his parishioners, questioning their own baptism, began to

question their scriptural right to church membership as well. Several withdrew from the small Blue Hill congregation, were re-baptized, and joined Merrill's already large church some seven miles away. For three years, Fisher tried to turn this tide of defection, but in the end, "almost one third" of his original flock withdrew from membership "for conscientious reasons" and formed the Blue Hill Baptist Church (Chase, *Fisher* 97-99). His views on "this vaine (sic) and unseemly talk of immersion as necessary to salvation" softened somewhat with the passing of time; he actually became friendly with several of the Baptist preachers in the Blue Hill area, but he must have also given a sigh of relief when "several of those withdrawn to the Baptists . . . [finally] removed [themselves] from town" (Chase, *Heritage* 18-19).

While Jonathan Fisher battled against the spread of Methodist and Baptist doctrines within its borders, Blue Hill extended its economic borders across the seas, becoming an important player in the world of international commerce. The settlers of the town had all been farmers who, because of their distance from the markets of Massachusetts, began to pursue an adjunct occupation—shipping. Small Chebacco boats, barques, and brigs were fashioned by local carpenters, and Blue Hill entered the coastwise sea trade. The early settlers and their children exchanged homegrown goods in Boston for manufactured items much needed at home. Lumber was traded for provender; native granite, quarried from the nearby hills and seaside ledges, built palatial buildings in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, and ice, cut from the ponds, lakes, and streams nearby, made its way to homes hundreds of miles to the south. By the second decade of the nineteenth century, the third generation of Blue Hill residents sailed themselves and their homeport into American maritime history. Ships constructed at Blue Hill, and

mastered by local men, found business in the American West, in South America, in Europe, in the Middle East, in Africa, in Australia, and in Asia. With the money earned from these lucrative ventures, the grandsons and great-grandsons of the town's pioneers "became men of wider vision and of longer thoughts" (Chase, *Heritage* 15). In the words of Sarah Orne Jewett, they "knew something of the wide world, and never mistook their native parishes for the whole instead of a part thereof; they knew not only Thomaston and Castine and Portland, but London and Bristol and Bordeaux, and the strange-mannered harbors of the China Sea" (129). Sailing from Blue Hill on these "far voyages," the descendants of pioneer stock found "farther mental horizons as well as the steady accumulation . . . of means" (Chase, *Heritage* 15-16). Returning to their New England hometown, these seafaring men and their enterprising, courageous wives

built substantial homes of wood and brick, homes with wide-mouthed chimneys, broad roofs, and beautiful doorways; they spoke familiarly of London and Hongkong, Calcutta and Mozambique; in the [eighteen] fifties and sixties they sent their more bookish sons to college, to Yale and Bowdoin, Harvard and Princeton. And when the [eighteen] nineties came and the turn of another century was not far distant, [these sea-going descendants of the original settlers] told their children [and grandchildren] of them with the realization that out of simple beginnings, by toil, by adaptation to circumstances, and by seizure of occasions, one generation can give rise to a better (Chase, *Heritage*, 16).

With the coming of the American Civil War and the perfection of the steam-powered engine, the golden age of American sail came gradually to a close. Fewer ships sailed from Blue Hill, and Blue Hill, like other small ports in New England, saw "a change for the worse" (Jewett 25). The dockyards—thriving and alive just a generation before—fell

into disrepair and ruin; the “bookish sons,” who would have pursued college degrees and then become masters of sailing vessels like their fathers and grandfathers before them, learned to practice law or medicine, became bankers or college professors—leaving Blue Hill for fields of wider opportunity. The American West allured some; still others were drawn away to the larger cities of both Maine and New England. Those people choosing to stay at home turned their endeavors—out of sheer economic necessity—to the new and rather disturbing industry now known as tourism.

Tourism, the “invasion of Blue Hill by outside people,” did much to correct a lagging local economy “since the old seafaring days had gone beyond recall,” but it brought in its wake, a plethora of social problems based on non-wealth versus wealth, pitting the poverty-stricken native against the rich, urbane rusticator (Chase, “Hometown” 41). Starting in the late 1880s and early 1890s, these “‘people from away,’ in the Maine coast phrase,” began buying land and erecting lavish summer cottages in Blue Hill (Chase, “Hometown” 41). This actuality put the otherwise economically depressed people of Blue Hill to work and ensured the overall survival of the town, but it also threatened to undermine the community’s autonomy, integrity and unified social fabric. The wealthy summer people “knew little of Maine history, Maine pride, or Maine people,” and the natives, feeling “shy and ill-at-ease” with their new neighbors, allowed “an insurmountable barrier” to develop between the two disparaging groups (Chase, “Hometown” 41). This problem, more detrimental than even a shifting and unstable local economy, forever changed the social outlook of Blue Hill, and it was into this new era that Mary Ellen Chase was finally born. Chase clearly saw during her early life that “the invasion of ‘summer people’ . . . greatly altered the livelihood, the manners, and the

thinking of the native Maine stock” (Chase, “Hometown” 40-41). As the daughter of one of Blue Hill’s “bookish sons,” a direct descendant of Blue Hill’s Joseph Wood and “the middle class English who made New England,” and a member Jonathan Fisher’s Congregational Church, she felt it her duty to tell the world something of life in Maine and New England before the advent of “this new ‘industry’” (Chase, “Hometown” 41). She came to realize the importance and significance of her heritage, and through her writing, she found that she could widen her region’s “borders by the extension of . . . influences into other and [still] larger fields” of art (Chase, *Heritage* 16). “By [literary] toil, by adaptation to [modern] circumstances, and by seizure of [educational] occasions,” she and her “generation [could truly] give rise to a better” understanding of and respect for the New England past and the people who had in so many ways helped to shape it (Chase, *Heritage* 16).

BIOGRAPHY

Mary Ellen Chase was born in Blue Hill, Maine, on February 24, 1887, the second child of Edward Everett Chase, Sr., and Edith Mabel (Lord) Chase. She was originally named Minnie Ella Chase in honor of her father's aunt, Maria Elizabeth (Chase) Butman, and his sister, Mary Dyer (Chase) Herrick (W. W. Hinckley). Both women were known affectionately as "Min" or "Minnie" within and without the family, and Chase was bestowed with their mutual nickname (W. W. Hinckley). She so despised the use of "Minnie," that after leaving home for her second year of college, she changed her name to Mary Ellen—in a more dignified deference to her original namesakes and much to the chagrin of her immediate family (W. W. Hinckley). Her parents and her six existing siblings, in return, so disliked her name change that they refused to call her "Mary Ellen" until Chase had established herself as a widely read and widely-respected author (W. W. Hinckley).

The Chase household, by outward appearances at least, was typical of both its time and its place. Father was the breadwinner; Mother was the caregiver. Edward Everett Chase, Sr., was the town's only attorney-at-law, a distinction of social prestige rather than of monetary income. He was usually employed by poor, country people with little or no capital to pay him; he instead took material items in barter for his services. Farm animals, foodstuffs, firewood, and small parcels of land all became grist to his financial mill. Edith Mabel Chase oversaw the complete maintenance of the home. She nurtured and raised the children, tended them at their school lessons, and watched after her aging mother-in-law during her six-month stays in Blue Hill. With the occasional help of a "hired girl," she did all the cooking, cleaning, washing, ironing, mending,

gardening, and preserving. If the Chases were at all unhappy, the author never tells us. Mary Ellen, writing of her childhood, deals with the positive side of the family's life, never mentioning, except in a moral or humorous way, any unpleasantness to which she and her siblings were subjected. All the Chase children, coming from good Puritan stock on both sides of their family, were expected to behave, to respect their elders, to always tell the truth, and to perform certain household chores "allotted to [them] according to [their] several abilities" (Chase, *Heritage* 43).

Chase's father, Edward Everett Chase, Sr., by all reports, was a strict and stern man. He was born in Blue Hill on March 19, 1861, and there he died on February 17, 1914, at the age of fifty-two of nephritis, a kidney disease which was exacerbated and worsened by his chronic alcoholism (W. W. Hinckley). The "bookish son" of a successful sea-captain turned merchant, Melatiah Kimball Chase, he, as his daughter later writes, "was born with the proverbial silver spoon in his mouth" (Chase, *Heritage* 36). Edward Chase's great-grandson, Wallace William Hinckley of East Winthrop, Maine, goes a step further when he suggests that the young Edward was a "very spoiled" child (W. W. Hinckley, Letter). Due to his premature birth some five and six years after the respective deaths of his two older sisters, Abby and Annie, his parents were overly protective, and family tradition states that his survival as an infant was ensured by the meticulous and careful care given him by his midwife mother, Eliza Ann (Wescott) Chase (W. W. Hinckley). He was the youngest child and the only son in the Chase family; his only surviving sister, Mary Dyer Chase, was four years his senior (W. P. Hinckley).

Chase was educated in Blue Hill, first at the village grammar school and later at the Blue Hill Academy. An avid reader but a poor student beset with behavioral problems, he was sent to private boarding schools at Westbrook and Hallowell. His parents, Mary Ellen Chase asserts, took "more than one hurried trip . . . to the school to extricate him from non-academic difficulties" (Chase, *Heritage* 36). From the Hallowell Classical Institute, he finally graduated in 1882, and he went on to Bowdoin College where he studied under famous Civil War hero and former Maine governor, Joshua Chamberlain (W. W. Hinckley). Chase left Bowdoin without a degree after two years of study and returned to his parents' home in Blue Hill. Soon after his homecoming, he met Edith Mabel Lord, and they were married on June 5, 1884 (W. P. Hinckley). He later read law with the firm of Wiswell and King in the nearby city of Ellsworth and was admitted to the Hancock County Bar Association in 1888 (Bowler 148). Ever a staunch and vigorous Republican, Edward Chase served during his short life as a Municipal Court Judge, a Judge of Probate, a Representative to the State Legislature, a trustee of the newly formed Maine State Hospitals in Augusta and Bangor, and a member of the Governor's Executive Council (Bowler 148). As a civic minded resident of Blue Hill, he served for many years as a trustee of Blue Hill-George Stevens Academy, the Blue Hill Fair Association, and the Blue Hill Congregational Church (W. W. Hinckley). Always conscious of outward appearances and social distinction, he "preferred that everyone call him 'Judge'" (W. W. Hinckley, Letter).

Mary Ellen Chase's relationship with her father was by no means a very pleasant one. While she admired him, she feared him as well. We are told that she "respected her father's gifts, admired his intellect, but was chilled by his capacity for wrath" (E. H.

Chase 15-16). Chase always described “her father as a fine and brilliant man, [but] what she did not mention in any of her works was that he was an alcoholic, and [that] this tempered her love for him” (Squire 24). In many respects, this fear of his wrath served as a “pillar of influence on [Mary Ellen Chase’s] life, education, and ambition” (W. W. Hinckley, Letter). He expected his children to be great achievers and was not above using verbal and emotional abuse whenever and wherever they fell short. Mary Ellen and her siblings considered their father an autocrat—he insisted that they address him as ‘sir’ whenever speaking to him—but they fearfully appreciated the emphasis he placed on intellectual pursuit and excellence. Elienne Squire, Chase’s former student at Smith College and biographer, writes that the young Mary Ellen often

felt inadequate and unloved, especially by her father, whose approval she craved. Her early fears of failure stemmed from his high standards and her inability to meet them. Her father often told her that, since she displayed no signs of ambition, she could doubtless some day earn her living as a hairdresser (32).

From her father, however, Mary Ellen Chase inherited an insatiable love of literature and history—passions she would indulge for the entirety of her own life. Writing of Judge Chase, she explains that his own

love for books and study became the consuming passion of his life. At home he was literally never without a book. Taking up the law as a profession after his early marriage . . . he read, not law but everything else on his weekly drives of fourteen miles to and from Blue Hill. He read at his solitary breakfasts which he always ate apart from his family and later than they; for, since he read half the night, he rose not before eight. He read in his office when he should have been at Blackstone; he read during the

long evenings while we studied our lessons. He believed and practised his faith that books and the resources therefrom are not only the sole proof against the slings and arrows of fortune but the one sure solace of life. History was his major interest . . . He had an extraordinary, almost miraculous memory for dates (Chase, *Heritage* 37).

Mary Ellen always took great care to read only those books her father thought appropriate—often substituting “the biographies and historical sketches of J. S. C. Abbot” for such childish fare as “the *Five Little Peppers*” (Chase, *Heritage* 47). Judge Chase’s example of life-long reading and life-long learning must have impressed Mary Ellen and her seven siblings. Out of the eight Chase children, all but one pursued college degrees. Mildred, Mary Ellen, Edith, Virginia, Olive, and Newton became teachers, professors, and writers. Edward Jr., who became a highly respected lawyer and State Representative, would have been a strong Republican contender for the Maine governorship in 1954 had he not been tragically killed in an airplane crash just a year before (W. W. Hinckley). John, the only non-professional in the family, owned and operated a successful variety store for much of his life.

While Judge Chase “had great influence over family administration” in matters of religion, education, and the rules of acceptable behavior, his wife, Edith Mabel (Lord) Chase, “carried out his wishes and was [the] most admired” by the Chase children (W. W. Hinckley, Letter). The family had “no doubt that . . . she . . . was equally or more brilliant” than her husband (W. W. Hinckley, Letter). Mrs. Chase, known simply as Mabel to close friends and family, was probably “the most significant donor to the gene pool and provided the greatest nature/nurture influence” within the family unit (W. W. Hinckley, Letter). She was born in Blue Hill on June 7, 1866, and died there on

September 16, 1945 (W. P. Hinckley). Mabel Chase was the daughter of John Newton Lord, a watch painter and businessman, and his wife, Edith Wood (Hinckley) Lord. Little is known of Mrs. Lord as she fell “prey to consumption” at an early age and died when her only daughter, Mabel, was but nine years of age (Chase, *Heritage* 24). John Newton Lord later married Mrs. Margaret (Fossett) Hibbard and moved first to Ellsworth and then to Waltham, Massachusetts, leaving the young Mabel in the care of his parents, Heard and Serena (Osgood) Lord (Wescott, “Lord”).

Mabel Lord, a bright child with a winning personality, was educated at the Blue Hill Village School and entered Blue Hill Academy at the age of twelve. Her daughter writes, “She learned . . . upon her entrance . . . that young women might excel young men in their studies” (Chase, *Heritage* 25). During her four years at the Academy, she distinguished herself as a scholar, “becoming early proficient in Latin,” and “witnessed the wider entrance of her sex into the teaching profession” (Chase, *Heritage* 25). She graduated from Blue Hill Academy with a diploma denoting her academic concentration in the difficult and arduous classical course—a course of study usually reserved for the young men. The classical course consisted of the ordinary academic subjects with an added emphasis on the language, literature, and history of the ancient world. In their four years of study, all Blue Hill Academy students were drilled in English, mathematics, geography, elementary science, and history; those electing the classical course began studying Latin in their first year and Greek in their second or third years. For this distinction, their parents were charged a weekly fee of thirty-five cents, fifteen cents more than the fee required of all those students electing the English or general course. Blue Hill Academy, one of the preeminent New England secondary schools of the time,

had been established in 1803 by the Reverend Jonathan Fisher to classically educate young men for college and the Congregational ministry. But, by the middle of the nineteenth century, the trustees of Blue Hill Academy “heard even in [their] isolated community of the growing popularity and prestige of Female Seminaries, of the founding of colleges for women,” and thus, opened their doors to women as well (Chase, *Heritage* 25). After her high school graduation, Mabel taught two terms of district school when “she was invited back to the Academy to assist in the instruction of Latin Grammar” (Chase, *Heritage* 26). We are told that “she went with pride and dignity to teach young men who dreamed of Bowdoin College” (Chase, *Heritage* 26).

During her one and only year as a preceptor at Blue Hill Academy, Edith Mabel Lord met Edward Everett Chase, and the two fell in love. She was barely seventeen, and he was twenty-three. Her grandparents, thinking Edward a “cad,” strongly opposed the marriage, but Mabel, as family tradition relates, told them “if it were not a good marriage, they would never hear her complain, and she never did” (W. W. Hinckley, Letter). Mabel Lord, her daughter-in-law writes, “defied her [grand]parents’ advice and married the wild, erratic, Edward Everett Chase . . . a gambler . . . [who] sometimes drank too much” (E. H. Chase 19-20). The newlyweds moved into the large Melatiah and Eliza Chase home on Union Street in Blue Hill Village and resided there for the remainder of their married life. Even though “it may not have been the perfect marriage” due to her husband’s demanding nature and his excessive drinking habits, Mabel Chase, giving birth to and then rearing a large family, soon learned how to placate her husband and how to create a peaceful atmosphere in which to raise her children. She again assumed the role of teacher even as Edward set himself up as the dictatorial headmaster or superintendent

of the Chase household. While the Judge served as “the instigator of various schemes for mental training and enrichment [of their children],” Mabel sought ways to bring his schemes and plans into fruition. Edward Chase “sowed the seed, as it were, likewise reaped the harvest and gazed upon his crop.” It was the undaunted and ever clever “mother, however, who weeded and watered, harrowed and pruned, against the time of gathering into barns” (Chase, *Heritage* 219). Of Mabel Chase’s life and her contributions to her family, Mary Ellen lovingly writes,

At just eighteen she married my father, five years her senior. Her first child came close upon her nineteenth birthday, her eighth not far from her forty-sixth. Of her life spent in the nurture and upbringing of her five daughters and three sons, of her vitality and her humour, of her eager co-operation in her husband’s profession, of her interest and participation in the thought and the reading of three generations [of her own descendants], [I] will bear inadequate witness (Chase, *Heritage*, 26).

Mabel, in short, lived for no other purpose than to see her husband and children succeed in life. Whatever the scheme, whatever the need, Mabel Chase, as one in that “long, hooded procession [of women], stretching back through hundreds of years . . . who counted their lives well lost in the salvation of their husbands and [families] from complete oblivion,” stood for intelligence, family, and the unity of the two (Chase, *Heritage* 23-24). Whether eagerly helping to write a speech for her husband, cheerfully discharging her household duties, or enthusiastically instructing her children in the mysteries of “Latin Grammar and Cicero,” Mabel “constantly effaced herself in her care [of her family]” (Chase, *Heritage* 24). Mary Ellen later writes to this incredible

woman's credit, "My mother was my first and always my best teacher" (Chase, *Fellowship* 3).

The Chases, like most New England families of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, whether they were exceptionally religious or not, attended church as a matter of respectable course. Church attendance, a part of the weekly rites established by the Puritan fathers, continued unquestioned and unabated in most New England villages at the time. Monday was the washing day. Tuesday was the ironing day. Saturday was the baking and bathing day. Chase records that "to all Protestant communities in rural New England during the nineties (and in the State of Maine there was almost no distinctly rural community which was not wholly Protestant) Sunday was unmistakably the Lord's Day" (Chase, *Heritage* 133). No work and no amusements, regardless of how innocent or benign, were allowed to desecrate this day of holy days. She describes the typical Lord's Day in Blue Hill:

Sundays in all seasons dawned soberly. Toys of all kinds had been put away in closed drawers or in the corners of the stable. To allow a sled or cart in the driveway was unthinkable. After a somewhat later breakfast of warmed-over beans and brown bread, we prepared for church and Sunday school, warned of such necessity by the nine o'clock bells which pealed alternately from two white steeples on opposite hills . . . Our family left the house shortly after 10:15 as we must be ascending the church steps by the time the somber tolling of the last bell began just before the half hour. My father always walked a bit ahead of the rest of us . . . My mother, often flurried a bit by her morning's undertakings, always had very pink cheeks as she brought up the rear (Chase, *Heritage* 135).

Edward Chase, born and bred a Congregationalist, insisted that he and his family take an active part in the services of the Blue Hill Congregational Church even though "his

theology was [most probably] Unitarian” (Chase, *Heritage* 40). They attended, without question, the morning worship service, Sunday School, and evening prayer service. The New England Congregational Church was known for its money, power, prestige, and social refinement, and Judge Chase, a man of old-time Puritan stock and bearing, could not break with such time-honored family traditions. But, Mabel Chase, although she “forsook her Baptist heritage for the sake of family integrity,” never truly veered from her own Baptist faith (Chase, *Heritage* 135). The Lords, “early tinged with the Baptist ‘heresy,’” had been among the leaders of those wayward and misguided souls who had defected from the Congregational Church in 1803 and established the Blue Hill Baptist Church in 1806 (Chase, *Heritage* 18). Mabel’s great-grandfather, Benjamin Lord, had the distinction of being one of the first “two [Blue Hill residents] . . . ordained as Baptist ministers, men of good character but of small education” who had struck fear into the sectarian hearts of the Reverend Jonathan Fisher and his orthodox Congregationalist followers. By her husband’s command, Mabel faithfully attended the Blue Hill Congregational Church until his death in 1914; at that time, true to her unyielding and dissenting forebears and showing some of her ancestor Joseph Wood’s independence, she had the Chase family pew forever removed from the Congregational Church (W. W. Hinckley). She promptly returned her membership and financial support to the Blue Hill Baptist Church (W. W. Hinckley).

Mary Ellen Chase, a youngster with a strong yet forbearing personality, experienced great perplexity in religious matters. She found the “two white churches as lovely and gracious in their architecture as they were cramped and forbidding in their theology” (Chase, *Mary Peters* 104). While she appreciated the beauty and formality

found within the Congregational Church, “the lengthy sermons on theological subjects meant little to her when a child” (Westbrook 19). Of her earliest religious perceptions, Chase tells us:

I do not know that the church service itself engendered much religion within us. The sermons were long and abstruse, and, even as I grew older, I do not recall any which meant much to me. But the solemnity of the occasion, the observance together of a custom, the sense of well-being and of well-doing—memories of these I would not be without. Details, imagination to bring later their longer, richer consequences: the black shadows of birds passing and repassing behind the coloured glass of a memorial window; the sunlight lying in bright, precise figures across the pulpit steps; the order and beauty of the white panelled pews with their polished, mahogany railings; the words and the imagery of old hymns. Most of all I remember verses of the Bible as they were read by the singularly beautiful voice of the old pastor whom I knew throughout my childhood. Sometimes the sonorous quality of the words themselves quite apart from their sense stayed long with me:

“Wherefore, seeing we also are encompassed about by so great a cloud of witnesses . . .”

“The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus . . .”

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Chase, *Heritage* 140).

What Chase describes here is not so much religion as the aesthetics of religion, those “outward and visible signs,” which, to a thoroughly Protestant mind of the nineteenth century at least, represented the “inward spiritual grace” of the Christian faith—order, decorum, and spiritual beauty found in simplicity (Chase, “Pottery”).

To the old-time Calvinistic regime, of which the Blue Hill Congregational and Baptist Churches were both a part, a personal religious experience, the spiritual epitome of order and decorum as found within the simplistic beauty of a thoroughly Protestant

gospel, offered the only door to church membership and to Heaven. God, through His grace, saved those people He elected to save, and the candidate for rebirth, in order to qualify for God's unmerited favor, was expected to have a "direct [or born-again] experience" (Westbrook 19). "Without [this] conversion and the overwhelming spiritual change it was supposed to bring about," Perry Westbrook explains, "one could not be considered a true Christian, one of the Communion of Saints" (20). The "outward and visible signs" of this salvation experience were two-fold. The first occurred when penitent persons went forward in the service to make their "peace with God" in a highly outward, highly visible, and highly public fashion. As these unsaved people knelt at the altar and prayed the "sinners' prayer," the "inward and spiritual grace [of God]" began to work within their souls, instantly making them new creatures in Christ Jesus. This conversion experience then wrought the second manifestation of the "outward and visible signs" of personal salvation—an "overwhelming spiritual change" in the new converts' personal behavior (Westbrook 19). Having undergone these outward and these inward changes, the individual converts were then examined, or questioned, by the pastor and deacons of the church, and if found in an acceptable state of grace, they were offered church membership. Westbrook explains that a "failure to experience conversion, [and gain admittance to church membership], was, therefore, a stigma on the individual and his family" (20).

Unregenerate young people were expected to make their decisions on this weighty matter at an early age, and Mary Ellen Chase, throughout her adolescent years, grappled with this Protestant concept of salvation and the embarrassment attendant upon it. In Blue Hill during her childhood and teenage years, the two churches, concerned about "the

conversion of the young in their parishes,” set in motion the yearly “machinery . . . [by] which it might be facilitated” (Chase, *Heritage* 150). Concerting their evangelistic efforts, the two ministers proclaimed the first week of each new year, “the January Week of Prayer,” a time of old-fashioned revival meetings and extreme religious agitation (Chase, *Heritage* 150). For Chase, this week was a time of “painful introspection” and soul-searching (Westbrook 20). Most young people were encouraged by their parents, their teachers, and their already converted peers to attend these religious meetings. Chase was neither persuaded nor dissuaded by her parents; in this one aspect of her life, they did not dare to intrude. Her teachers, whom Chase considered the educational cohorts of the ministers, may have exerted pressure on their students to attend, but of this we know nothing simply because she does not tell us. Chase, however, has much to say about the overly charged religious atmosphere surrounding the youths of Blue Hill in her day:

Conversion in the nineties was not considered, as it is today, one of those varieties of religious experience interesting alike to the philosopher and the psychologist. Instead, in communities like our own where philosophy was relatively unknown and psychology, even as a term, practically unheard of, it was regarded as a necessary and fearfully important occurrence in one’s life, usually undergone in adolescence . . . This first week in January was, throughout my young adolescence, the most dramatic period of the year. It was a period fraught with emotion and embarrassment, tense with excitement. Studies and lessons which engaged our attention at all other times were practically set aside during those seven days, —sacrificed, as it were, to the well-being of our immortal souls. Life at school was strained and unnatural. Serious consultations were held with one’s best friends before the sessions opened; during recesses one not infrequently listened to the tearful revelations of a close associate who had, the evening before, been touched by the Spirit, or to the equally tearful fears of another who could not quite bring herself to “take the first step” . . . Those who had signified by various

participations in the meeting of the preceding night that they had come to a realization of their sins and were ready to lead a new life were subjected the next morning to the curious scrutiny of all their companions. Truly, it took a stout heart to traverse that school-room to one's own uncomfortable seat! Even the assurance of complete regeneration could not banish cruel self-consciousness and embarrassment (Chase, *Heritage* 150-151).

Mary Ellen Chase did eventually capitulate to the religious frenzy swirling about her, and she joined the Blue Hill Congregational Church in her twentieth year. Perry Westbrook compares Chase's conversion experience with the earlier New England revivals found during the Great Awakening:

At Blue Hill were fomented states of group hysteria reminiscent of those of Jonathan Edwards' heyday in Northampton. For the sensitive and overconscientious, this time could be a period of hell, as it apparently was for Miss Chase; but she finally managed to convince herself and others that she was "saved." This emphasis on religion had a permanent effect on Mary Ellen Chase (20).

The memories of those seven days enacted yearly during her childhood left a lasting impression upon Chase and her adult theology. She clearly recognized the impact that "the comic and serious aspects . . . [of] a waning yet still vigorous Puritanism" had upon her early life (Chase, *Heritage* 8). She would later write, "Years were required for the revulsion and renovation of my theological concepts" (Chase, *Heritage* 100).

Mary Ellen Chase, like both of her parents before her, began her formal educational training in the Blue Hill Village School. This school, which consisted of two rooms, the downstairs room housing the lower school and the upper room housing the grammar school, had its counterpart in thousands of other rural communities across New

England and, indeed, the United States. Chase's reminiscences of that most all-American institution and what she learned within its "ugly and ungainly . . . high rectangular architecture" are both humorous and informative (Chase, *Heritage* 248). Writing some forty years later, she playfully explains,

According to all modern standards, I was very badly educated, if educated at all, in the village school of Blue Hill. This institution in the nineties was almost wholly didactic, allowing the will comparatively little freedom and lending no encouragement whatsoever to individual quirks and idiosyncrasies. The "self" and its "expression" were entirely (perhaps wholesomely) neglected in the schoolroom; on the playground it found then, as always, various ways and means of asserting itself. Our rigid, unyielding days were governed by precept upon precept, line upon line; our preferences in any matter were rarely, if ever, consulted. From nine o'clock in the morning until four o'clock in the afternoon we did precisely as we were told to do. That the occasional revolutionary among us was rarely upheld by public opinion and that the vast majority of us loved school, with all its relentlessness, would seem to bear evidence that our training was neither wholly fallacious nor absurd (Chase, *Heritage* 247).

Clearly, education in rural Maine of the 1890s, was not far removed from what it had been in early days of settlement. School served as a "didactic" adjunct of the church—children learned to read in order to understand the Holy Bible and to become informed citizens. One can easily imagine the children of Joseph Wood and John Roundy, the first Puritan settlers of Blue Hill, attending a school not much different than the one Chase attended a hundred and thirty years later. "Our teachers," Chase tells us, "were held to be at their noblest and best when they supplemented or complemented the ministers in religious and ethical instruction" (Chase, *Heritage* 252). Dependent upon property taxes,

always a bad by-word in old-time New England, the town scantily built, scantily manned, and scantily equipped its rural schools. “Grades were unknown,” writes Chase, “although classes were recognized and named by letters” (Chase, *Heritage* 248). The two teachers teaching at the Blue Hill Village School were “harassed and over-worked . . . [and] had no time to attend to the frills and extras even [if they] had known anything about them or discerned any value therein” (Chase, *Heritage* 248). The education offered from such humble institutions, where even “the furnishings . . . bore sturdy witness, not only to municipal poverty, but also to a strict [puritanical] regard for essentials only,” was considered adequate for the needs of a poor, coastal community (Chase, *Heritage* 248). A generation later, the “professional educators,” a term Chase would both despise and ridicule, would call the Blue Hill Village School and its neighboring sisters, the one-room district schools, obsolete, old fashioned, and educational detriments to a modern society. Nevertheless, Chase—writing at a time when school consolidation, the newest educational fad to spread across Maine and much of the nation, was threatening to close such schools—found much to appreciate in her early education. She realized that even in the lowest and most humble of educational environs, in buildings dilapidated and dog-eared, lacking all the modern amenities and frills, schools where Protestant dogma was still freely thrown about with little or no regard to other theological opinions, children—if they so desired—could learn, provided they were given good teachers instead of professionally-trained and professionally-ruined “educators” (Chase, *Fellowship* xii).

During her childhood, Mary Ellen Chase was not without her share of cheerful diversions. These diversions, Judge Chase’s “bursts of generosity,” came usually in the form of gifts and trips (E. H. Chase 15). Birthdays and Christmases brought their share

of homemade toys, new clothes, and most importantly, new books. Chase and her siblings greedily devoured everything within their own slender library. They ransacked the libraries of their friends and neighbors voraciously looking for new and interesting reading materials. And, they spent as much time as possible in the Ladies Social Library—the forerunner of the Blue Hill Public Library. In a house where both parents by example and by precept expressed daily their own love of good books and good literature, reading was as important as eating or sleeping. Chase writes of playing a game called “Authors,” which early in her life introduced her to the major writers of the nineteenth century and their most notable works. It is not then surprising that Chase records, with great emotion and in vivid detail, her two childhood brushes with literary greatness.

Near her eleventh birthday in February 1898, Judge Chase arranged for Mary Ellen to attend a literary reading by noted Maine author, Laura E. Richards, in the nearby city of Ellsworth. Richards, the daughter of the famous Julia Ward Howe and a resident of Gardiner, was widely known for her children books, *Captain January*, *Timothy’s Quest*, *Three Margarets*, *A Summer in a Canyon*, *Rosin the Beau*, *The Birds’ Christmas Carol*, and *Grandmother*. Chase attended the reading given at the Ellsworth Congregational Church with a friend of her mother’s, and after the author’s address, just before Richards began reading from *Captain January*, she motioned to Mary Ellen to come and sit at her feet. In *A Goodly Heritage*, Chase says of the occasion:

I had been so staring at [Richards] with big, round eyes, which scarcely blinked for fear of missing her slightest movement, that I suppose her own eyes were irresistibly drawn to me sitting just before her in my blue dress and big white tie. There can, indeed, be no other explanation of her

notice, for I was distinctly a plain child with nothing whatever to make me stand out save very red cheeks, which that night, I presume, were redder than ever. But be that as it may, explain it as you will, the incredible fact is, was, and will always be that she beckoned to me to draw near her in her great red chair. Astonishment and incredulity almost held me to my seat had not the practical sense of my guardian brought me to my senses and demanded that I move quickly forward to the threshold of genius. "I always did like red-cheeked girls," [Richards] said, as she took my hand in hers. "And now won't you sit by me on this footstool while I read?" (244-245).

Chase's clear memory of her "first author" provided her with "one of the high-water marks of [her] life" (Chase, *Heritage*, 241). She knew even at that early age that writers were somehow a group held apart from the common lot of humankind. She simply states that in this meeting "there was an intangible something which I did not tell, which I could not have told if I would—an inviolable sense of Experience within experience and transcending the fruit thereof" (Chase, *Heritage* 246).

This "inviolable sense of Experience within experience" manifest itself again some two years after Chase's meeting with Laura Richards. On a trip with her father to York County in 1900, Mary Ellen Chase met and gained the notice of Sarah Orne Jewett, "the Dean of Maine Letters" (Chase, "Novels" 15). This meeting, on Chase's thirteenth birthday, gave the young would-be-author the chance to vent her own literary aspirations for the first time. Chase describes her meeting with Jewett:

My father himself, whom I recall always with a book in his hand, had known Sarah Orne Jewett aside from her books for several years; and I imagine he wanted me to have the thrill of looking upon her face to face, since I, too, because of his own devoted enthusiasm, had already become her faithful disciple through my early love of *The Country of the Pointed Firs*. Be all things as they may have been, at

least we went to South Berwick on the twenty-fourth day of February, my thirteenth birthday, in the year 1900.

As to Hazlitt in his description of his meeting with Coleridge in *My First Acquaintance with Poets*, the occasion was to me a “romance,” a kind of coming to life of all my secret dreams. Yet I recall of it only two seemingly unrelated features: what Miss Jewett wore, and one of the many things she must have said during the exciting half-hour of our stay. Her dress was lavender with long sleeves and a high waistline, doubtless a simple enough frock; yet it alone has meant lavender to me ever since that day, now a half century and more ago; and I shall never forget how she looked in it as she came down the winding staircase of her white, clapboard house to greet my father and me waiting in the wide hall below. In the same way her words about writing books have put out of being any other remark she must have made. This memorable remark was in response to her question—a question invariably asked of a child: “And what do you mean to do when you grow up?”

“I want to write books as you do,” I said, to the embarrassment of my father, who because of my shyness about my secret hopes had never heretofore been told of my lofty and ardent dream.

She smiled at me then, a smile which lightened and transformed her clean-cut, perhaps her rather severe, features. “I’m sure you will,” she said. “And good ones too—all about Maine” (Chase, “Jewett” ix).

Although Chase mentions her father’s initial embarrassment, no other mention is made of his reactions on their return to Blue Hill. The Judge, a Jewett fan, may have well thought that his daughter could do far worse than to emulate Jewett, a woman who by 1900 had the literary world virtually at her feet. Jewett and the Chases also shared a common heritage; she, like them, hailed from Puritan stock and, her people, like Mary Ellen’s own ancestors, found themselves at home in the pulpit, at the schoolteacher’s desk, and on the high seas. Writing of Jewett’s contributions to her own art, Chase says, “I would be the

last to claim any virtue or even value for my own books, but they *have* been about Maine, according to her prophecy, perhaps indeed, *because* of it” (Chase, “Jewett” ix). Chase states that as an author she tried always to “follow [Jewett’s] footsteps, stumbling and fumbling among the words which she so perfectly set down on paper, among the people whom she so unerringly portrayed, among the marshes and islands, the coves, the hills, the villages which she saw with a vision denied all other Maine authors” (Chase, “Novels” 15). Chase began writing her own portrayals of Maine life soon after she met Sarah Orne Jewett, who, as she later writes, would be “known long after the others of us [Maine writers] are forgotten” (Chase, “Novels” 15).

In the fall of 1901, Mary Ellen Chase entered Blue Hill-George Stevens Academy. The name change, due to the Congregational school known as Blue Hill Academy merging with the Baptist school known as George Stevens Academy, shows another level of cooperation developed between the two churches in a little less than a hundred years. Chase, like her mother before her, elected to take the classical course. Chase tells us that “in the nineties . . . and the earliest years of the nineteen hundreds . . . the classics still held their honoured sway” in New England (Chase, *Heritage* 261). Writing in 1939, she goes on to describe her high school career:

All the hundred boys and girls in the Academy of my time studied mathematics for three years. No possible exception was ever made. The few who did not study Latin, and they were very few, were denied the privilege only on the tacit ground of mental incapability. The great majority of us entered upon our Latin in the first year and many of us upon our Greek the next as a matter of course . . . In well-ordered New England families . . . children were rarely enticed by their parents toward the performance of anything. They did what they were told or supposed to do,

and the only enticement apparent lay in the attitude and behavior of those who had them in charge . . . The very fact that Latin and Greek were hard was to the well-brought-up children of my generation an added spur, enticement if you will. . Forty years ago there was a more basic respect for work of all kinds than there is at present, and that respect in the minds of decent people was immeasurably deepened and strengthened if work presented unusual difficulties (Chase, *Fellowship* 24-25).

That Chase enjoyed her high school years is everywhere evident in her later writings.

The Academy is mentioned in each of her autobiographical works, and it has—like Blue Hill—its counterpart in her fiction about Maine as well. Latin and Greek remained among Chase's life-long interests, and the discipline she acquired in her early study of them, she later applied to her study of German and her ultimate mastery of Hebrew. Hard work, whether mental or physical, was a part of her everyday New England existence. She had been taught to do all chores and discharge all duties to the best of her abilities, and schoolwork—like cleaning out the barn, tidying the parlor, rocking a fractious child, or trimming the kerosene lamps—had its own compensation and satisfaction. As her grandmother, Eliza (Wescott) Chase was fond of telling her, "Time never hung heavy on *my* hands. *I never* had to ask my mother what I might do. I loved hard work, for I could show how smart I was" (Chase, *Heritage* 30). Mary Ellen Chase's intelligence, like her mother's and her paternal grandmother's before, found its share of extraordinary outlets in the most ordinary of places.

Blue Hill-George Stevens Academy, ordinary as it was by New England standards of the time, allowed Mary Ellen Chase opportunity to pursue her extraordinary interest in writing. It was during her three high school years that Chase first began writing short

stories, essays, and the occasional poem. She wrote for and then edited *The Spectator*, a school paper designated for the first-year English class, and she later worked on *The Mountain Echo*, the school's combined newspaper, literary magazine, and yearbook. Elienne Squire, writing of Chase's early literary aspirations, says that

During her high school . . . years [Mary Ellen] began writing poetry and short fiction; the sestet, "To Spring," was printed in 1903 in *The Mountain Echo*, a periodical issued by Academy upperclassmen. In December of that year Chase wrote "A Maine Thanksgiving" for the same journal; it described the anticipation and excitement of the holiday and the traditional fare served in her household. In 1904 she was appointed Associate Editor of *The Mountain Echo*; her third piece, "Among the Maine Hills," appeared that spring (Squire, 39-40).

Sometime in the late winter or early spring of 1903, Chase also submitted "Aunt Maria's Best Room," a short story about an elderly great-aunt presumably living in Sanford, Maine; this story immediately precedes "To Spring," appearing on the two pages just before the poem. "Aunt Maria's Best Room" and "To Spring," in all likelihood, are the very first Chase pieces printed in *The Mountain Echo* soon after its inception in January 1903. The Volume and Issue references to this particular edition of the magazine are clearly marked as Volume I, Issue 3. In this story, a very young grandniece visits with her aged great-aunt. The story, no doubt modeled on a Chase visit to Maria Elizabeth (Chase) Butman who lived at one time in the Sanford area and was married to a man named John, revolves around family heirlooms found in a "shut up" bedroom which has an "air of a New England parlor, open only on special occasions" (Chase, "Aunt Maria" 5). As Aunt Maria explains the significance of each item of importance within the room, a handmade quilt, a large hand-embroidered sampler, a great-great-grandmother's

bedstand, the unnamed grandniece realizes that “there are too few old-fashioned people in this twentieth century” (Chase, “Aunt Maria” 4). This short story, in all likelihood, is the very first Chase piece printed that deals exclusively with her family and its New England heritage.

Mary Ellen Chase, although forever fond of the Academy and her time there, did not, it seems, graduate from that institution. She makes no reference to her graduation in any of her autobiographical writings, and her name and graduation date, though given after each of her submissions to *The Mountain Echo* as “Minnie Chase, ’05,” cannot be found or determined from the school’s otherwise complete records. Chase was born in 1887 and would have turned eighteen in February 1905; she entered the Academy in 1901, and if the course of study she elected lasted four years, as we know it did, she would have graduated in June 1905. But, Mary Ellen, by her own word, entered the University of Maine in the fall of 1904 with her older sister, Mildred: “Accordingly in September of 1904, after three nerve-racking days of writing entrance examinations at the University, my sister and I were admitted, and watched, not without pleasure and excitement, our gratified parents depart for home” (Chase, *Heritage* 273). Reading between the lines, we may assume that the Judge, perhaps using his political savvy and his own Orono connections, took Mary Ellen out of high school in June 1904 and arranged for her early entrance to the University of Maine the following fall. Whatever the case may be, Wallace William Hinckley, Mildred’s grandson and Mary Ellen’s great-nephew, has stated that he and noted Maine historian, Esther Wood, Chase’s friend and a fellow Blue Hill native, can find no mention in the records of Blue Hill-George Stevens

Academy of a Minnie Ella Chase, Class of 1903, 1904, or 1905, ever graduating (W W. Hinckley).

Chase's estimation of the University of Maine was by no means as glowing as the one she later bestowed upon Blue Hill-George Stevens Academy. Perry Westbrook writes that "on her instruction at the University of Maine, which she classes as undistinguished at that time, [Chase] is almost silent" (39). She and her sister, it is clearly evident, were not ecstatic about matriculating at the University of Maine. Mildred preferred Wellesley as the Chases had relatives living in the Boston area, and Mary Ellen wished to attend Brown University, where a favorite teacher, Florence Rafter, had earned her degree shortly before coming to the Academy. Mary Ellen's overall opinion was that the University of Maine, founded in 1865 as an agricultural school, was little better than a "cow college" at the time of her admittance in 1904 (W. W. Hinckley). Once again, Judge Chase, feeling that the family should support the State of Maine and only Maine institutions, insisted that his daughters earn their degrees from the University of Maine. Mary Ellen also writes that her father became convinced that "two might be sent to college within the state for the cost of one outside her borders and that the family treasury, never overly large, would be taxed to its utmost with seven to be educated" (Chase, *Heritage* 272-273). The two sisters, "reared upon the principle as well as the necessity of co-operation, relinquished [their] desires and prepared to enter the University of Maine" (Chase, *Heritage* 273).

Disappointed though they no doubt were, Mary Ellen and Mildred entered into the life at the University with a great deal of relish. For each, it was their first time away from home, and the freedom that engendered must have seemed indeed sweet. They

were no longer subjected to the Judge's mental drills and exercises on a daily basis, and they were, for perhaps the first time within their memories, without a long list of household chores to be performed both before and after school. The sisters joined Alpha Omicron Pi, a newly formed sorority, attended dances and parties, and made lasting friendships with other young men and women, who, like themselves, were "local [Maine] products . . . from rural areas" (Squire 42).

Chase and her sister, we are told, were "among the first women entering the University," and their father was duly impressed that they "should be taught with men, who in numbers at least would far eclipse [them]" (Chase, *Heritage* 273). He felt that in order for his two oldest daughters to be properly prepared and readied for life in the larger world, they should take their dramatic part in the intellectual "competition of the sexes" (Chase, *Heritage* 273). Mildred sought a BS degree concentrating on Latin and Mathematics; Mary Ellen, out of respect for her father's preferences, majored in History and Greek, hoping to earn her BA degree.

Mary Ellen's academic advisor during her years at Maine was an Indiana native and a history scholar, Caroline Colvin, "the only tenured female professor on the faculty" (Squire 51). Of her Chase writes,

fortunate was I in my history professor, who was then the only woman of a ranking position on the faculty. She had been trained for her doctorate under no less an historian than Professor Edward Cheyney of the University of Pennsylvania, and her teaching was admirable in the extreme. Under her thorough and careful demands I learned to read more searchingly than I had ever read before, until the pain of my bewildered mind began to give way before the relief afforded by steady mental exercise, thoughtfully, if sternly, administered (Chase, *Heritage* 281).

Chase and Colvin became life-long friends, the latter visiting the Chase family in Blue Hill several times during Mary Ellen's four years at the University of Maine. Chase found Colvin's "brilliant intellect" and her "consuming interest in her students" a refreshing and "rare combination" at a college both small and unknown (Squire, 51). Caroline Colvin encouraged Chase to write while a student at Maine, and she also encouraged her to seek her fortune, and an advanced degree, in the West after she earned her BA in 1909.

Caroline Colvin's educational example may have influenced Chase's choice of a career in academia, but her father, the ever practical, ever-critical Judge Chase of Blue Hill, was the one to ensure it. Teaching was one of the few vocational paths open to women at the turn of twentieth century, and Chase intended to become a teacher *only after* she earned her college degree. Her father, however, had other ideas. Judge Chase believed that teaching in a one-room district school was more conducive to the training of a teacher than anything else, including college training, could provide. He believed that teachers were born not made, and he felt compelled to measure his daughters' aptitude and inclination toward their chosen profession before investing too much money or too much time in their education. Mary Ellen tells us:

All my father's ideas were fixed and sturdy. One of them was that each of his daughters should teach a country school either before going to college or as an interruption between the second and third year there. He contended, with truth as I afterwards realized, that teaching not only was the best discipline for retention and enlargement of one's own meagre knowledge, but that it engendered maturity through the responsibility which it placed squarely upon one's own shoulders. If you had anything in you at all, said my father, three terms in a country school would bring it out. If you had nothing, then the entrance to

college or the continuation therein was obviously a waste both of time and of money. Unlike my older sister, who taught her school before she entered college, I taught mine in the spring of my sophomore year and in the year following (Chase, *Fellowship* 33).

In the spring of 1906, Mary Ellen Chase, citing her father's disapproval over a "disgraceful record in college mathematics" and "a somewhat chimerical love affair," found herself a teacher in the tiny, unruly school of Buck's Harbor, Maine—a remote and isolated fishing village some twelve miles from the Chase home in Blue Hill (Chase, *Fellowship* 34). Her father's only help and advice as he dropped her in front of the Buck's Harbor Schoolhouse came in the form of "a razor strop" and "a murmured command not to be slow in using it when necessary." Chase describes this "unwieldy package" as a "veritable godsend" (Chase, *Heritage* 288). For "without its moral as well as physical support," she would have "given up teaching for good and all one half hour after [she] had begun it" (Chase, *Fellowship* 36).

With forty-nine students ranging in age from four to eighteen, Chase found a situation similar to that of her own teachers in Blue Hill. The building was old and in an extremely poor condition with few, if any, educational extras or frills. Unlike the two teachers in the Blue Hill Village School, however, Chase was responsible for teaching all eight grades by herself. She recalls her first morning there as one "dedicated both to the theory and practice of the survival of the fittest" (Chase, *Fellowship* 36). To further complicate an already daunting task, the "oldest and most ominous" of the group were teen-age boys not much younger than she (Chase, *Heritage* 289). She amusingly writes of that first day and the discipline she so quickly established:

Dictates both of the Scriptures and of enlightened educational principles enjoin a rule of love rather than one of force. Nevertheless, district schools are not recorded in the New Testament; and it is at least questionable whether the most mild and pacific of educators ever attempted to govern one of the worst variety. A rule of love that April morning in the year 1906 would have failed me utterly. Desperate situations entail desperate remedies. Long before my father and his horse were halfway home, I found myself threatened with my own exit by way of the window; and I turned to my razor strop with a furious gratitude (Chase, *Heritage* 289).

Exactly how furious her gratitude actually was, we, unfortunately, do not know. Chase gives no detail as to how she used her father's gift. But, reading between the lines, we may assume that she threatened her charges, and therefore, averted a full-scale rebellion from them. What is known, though, is that Mary Ellen Chase managed to teach this school for a term of eleven weeks for which she was paid ten dollars a week. She writes, "I am sure I taught them very little; it was I who was educated in Buck's Harbor" (Chase, *Fellowship* 44). But, Chase so impressed the Buck's Harbor authorities that her reputation as a district teacher was at once solidified. She was next offered a teaching position in West Brooksville, a slightly larger village closer to her own home, for the following fall, winter, and spring terms. She accepted this post and later writes happily that "no razor strop was needed" (Chase, *Fellowship* 46).

With her enforced tenure as a country schoolteacher completed, Mary Ellen Chase resumed her studies at the University of Maine in the autumn of 1907. The college once again provided her the leisure she needed to study, read, and write. She had two prose pieces printed in Maine's *The Blue Book* soon after her return to Orono; these two short contemplative essays were entitled respectively "Fancies" and "Footsteps." "Fancies"

deals with Chase's "love of nature and abounds with colorful description of an unforgettable sunset;" in "Footsteps," Chase "identifies each person" who passes along the sidewalk beneath her window "by the measure of his tread" (Squire 40). In these two stories, Elienne Squire declares that the budding artist "displays keen powers of observation, a distinctive style, and a prevailing optimism" (40).

At this same time, Chase was offered, and accepted with gratitude, a teaching fellowship in the English Department, working with "students enrolled in a two years' agricultural course" (Chase, *Fellowship* 61). Of her first college students and her first college teaching experience, she writes,

These boys came from the farming districts of Maine and after two years returned to them to farm their acres and raise their stock more scientifically than they would otherwise have known how to do. Most of them were high school products, although some of them had had only a "common School" education. Many of them were older than I, and all of them were patient and pleasant under my attempts to teach a subject of which they knew little and which seemed to them comparatively useless. I enjoyed my farmers and their themes on the best manures for certain soils, on the breeding of stock, and the future of Maine as a dairy state. They were one and all most decent young men, and they made up for what they lacked in externals in a stout ambition to get their money's worth. Even although they secretly saw little relation between English grammar, the unity, coherence, and emphasis, which were then my stock and trade, and their lives on their Maine acres, they endured my ruthless enthusiasms with great good nature. At least they added not inconsiderably to my frail teaching experience and ensured me a better hope of a position once I had graduated from college (Chase, *Fellowship* 61-62).

Mary Ellen Chase graduated from the University of Maine on June 9, 1909; she was just twenty-two years old. Wanting employment and wanting to set out on her own,

Chase, encouraged and advised by her friend, Caroline Colvin, contacted a Mr. B. F. Clark of Chicago, a manager of a teacher placement agency. Her parents, fearful for her safety and the distance involved in such a move, tried to discourage her plans, encouraging her instead to take a teaching position much closer to home. Mary Ellen was inflexible and unmoved. Caroline Colvin, with the help of Judge Charles Dunn of Orono, also a close Chase family friend and a native of the Midwest, interceded on Mary Ellen's behalf, and her parents reluctantly agreed to let her set forth. Mabel Chase's only request as her daughter prepared to leave the family and Maine behind was that she not go "beyond the Mississippi" (Chase, *Fellowship* 63). Her mother, Chase writes, was "the average rural New Englander [of the early 1900s, who considered] the West . . . a somewhat mythical region, populated by people most of whom had not had the good sense to stay at home" (Chase, *Fellowship* 63). Mary Ellen left Blue Hill for Chicago in late August, and within two weeks of her initial meeting with Clark, she landed a teaching job at a private boarding school known as the Hillside Home School in Spring Green, Wisconsin. It was because of this removal, and perhaps the loneliness it engendered, that Mary Ellen Chase began to write to a purpose, to earn money for future study and travel. As she began teaching, she began sharing stories with her students about her life on the Maine coast; her students, many of them having never seen the ocean, became so interested in Maine coastal life that Chase eventually realized the wealth of literary materials she possessed. Squire writes that "Chase recounted her favorite stories of Maine seafaring days [to] the children [who] were so enthusiastic that she decided to write a book, a collection of New England sketches" (58). Mary Ellen Chase—fulfilling the prophecy of the lately deceased Sarah Orne Jewett—began her

literary career writing stories and books—all about Maine, her family, and the positive roles that each had played in the creation of the great New England tradition, eventually earning for herself the reputation “as first among New England literary ladies of her generation” (“Obituary”).

THE FAMILIAL GENEALOGIES

In 1936, shortly after the publication of her novel *Silas Crockett*, Mary Ellen Chase was accused by several critics of creating a novel with two major flaws: “first of all, idealizing a past which was long dead; secondly . . . regretting the death of that past” (Chase, “Noble History”). Chase, who was never overly concerned with the critics and their sometimes-negative appraisals of her work, at once took exception with these unfounded assertions. *Silas Crockett*, intended as a fictional family saga, traced four generations in a seafaring family living on the coast of Maine. The novel drew heavily on Chase’s own family background, and she felt at once compelled to set the record straight. She eloquently states in an article composed for the August 30, 1936, issue of the *Portland Sunday Telegram* that

Silas Crockett was written about a real Maine past for Maine people at home and elsewhere. And when I say in my dedication that these people still retain within themselves the graciousness and the dignity of their heritage, I mean that very thing. We do retain it, and I cannot believe that we shall lose it. Our State [and our region were] made by pioneer stock who wrested a hard living from the soil and from the sea. They knew hard work, privations, and dangers—things which in themselves brought out the best within them, a best which cannot die so long as it is kept in admiration and in honor by this generation and by those to come. For such a past and in the hope of such a future every Maine man, woman and child should be forever grateful (Chase, “Noble History”).

The critical affront leveled at *Silas Crockett* stirred within Chase feelings of loyalty and devotion not only to Maine and to New England but also towards her familial connections to those places as well. On both sides of her family, she was descended from “pioneer stock who wrested a hard living from the soil and from the sea.” As she says in

her own artistic defense, “[People] cannot lose sight of what has made them, but must forever remember it, and be grateful for it” (Chase, “Noble History”). Mary Ellen Chase expressed her own gratitude for her “splendid heritage” through her writings (Chase, “Noble History”). To best understand her literature, we must first know something about the people from whom she was descended.

Chase / Wescott

Mary Ellen Chase, on her father’s side of the family, was descended from wealthy seafarers and poor, upland farmers. Her grandfather, Captain Melatiah Kimball Chase, was born in Blue Hill, Maine, on March 1, 1823; he died in that town on December 27, 1884 (W. P. Hinckley). He married in the Blue Hill Congregational Church, July 16, 1849, Eliza Ann Wescott, a farmer’s daughter, who, in her early life, served as the town’s midwife and seamstress (W. P. Hinckley). Eliza Wescott was born in North Blue Hill on April 3, 1827; she died in Bethel, Maine, at the home of daughter, Mary Dyer (Chase) Herrick, on February 18, 1914, just one day after the death of her beloved son, Judge Edward Everett Chase (W. P. Hinckley). Melatiah and Eliza Chase went to sea soon after their marriage, and for ten years, lived as much in foreign ports as they did in Blue Hill. Melatiah died some two and a half years before Mary Ellen Chase was born, but from her grandmother, she “heard stories [about her grandfather and his life at sea] that took place among her most germinal memories” (Westbrook 18).

Thanks to the meticulous work of genealogist and historian George Walter Chamberlain, Melatiah Chase’s lineage can be traced back to the earliest days of colonial Massachusetts. The Chase family originated in England with William Chase, a Puritan,

who immigrated to New England with John Winthrop's Great Fleet in 1630. William Chase and his wife, Mary, the parents of three children, settled first in Roxbury, Massachusetts; the family then relocated in Yarmouth on Cape Cod in 1638. From the early records of the Roxbury Church, we learn that

William Chase . . . came with the first company, 1630; he brought one child his son william. A child of ill qualitys, & a sore affliction to his parents: [William Chase, Sr.,] was much afflicted by the long & tedious affliction of his wife; after his wives recovery she bare him a daughter, wch they named mary borne aboute the midle of the 3rd month [May], 1637. He did after yt remove (intending) to Situate, but after went with a company who maide a new plantation at yarmouth.

Mary Chase, the wife of William Chase. She had a paralitik humor wch fell into her back bone, so yt she could not stir her body, but as she was lifted, and filled her with great torture, & caused her back bone to goe out of joynt, & bunch out from the beginning to the end of wch infirmity she lay 4 years & a half, & a great pt of the time a sad spectacle of misery: But it pleasd God to raise her againe, & she bore children after it (46).

William Chase, a carpenter by trade, was apparently known for his independent and somewhat irreverent disposition: "At the General Court held at Plymouth, 6 June 1654, the 'Grand Enquest' presented 'William Chase, Senr. of Yarmouth for driving one paire of oxen in the yoke upon the Lords day, in time of exercise, about five miles'" (46). His son, William Chase Jr., the "child of ill qualitys," was born in England in 1627 and died on or about June 2, 1685; by one of his two wives, whose names are unknown to us, he fathered eight children. William Jr's third son, John Chase, born in Yarmouth April 6, 1649, married Elizabeth Baker, by whom he had six sons. Isaac Chase, the youngest in that particular family, also born at Yarmouth, died there May 22,

1759. Isaac Chase was twice married, first to Mary Berry, by whom he had nine children, and secondly to Charity (Pease) O'Kelly, by whom he had six more children. Isaac Chase's last son by Elizabeth Baker, Judah Chase, was born at Yarmouth on October 14, 1726. Judah Chase sailed from Yarmouth and became an early settler of Brunswick, Maine. There he married Margaret Woodside on April 8, 1752; she died at Brunswick March 24, 1798. Judah Chase died at that place on June 11, 1804. This couple's seventh child, Judah Chase, Jr., born November 16, 1765, in Brunswick, moved to Surry, Maine, where he married Lucy Bartlett of Mount Desert Island on February 9, 1796. They raised a family of twelve children. Their oldest child, James Chase, born March 2, 1797, married Mary "Polly" Kimball of Blue Hill on January 15, 1820. Mary Kimball was born October 12, 1799, at Blue Hill; she died in that town in 1887. Her husband died in Blue Hill on August 24, 1881.

James and Mary "Polly" (Kimball) Chase were the parents of Melatiah Chase and his eleven siblings. James, like his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather before him, was a seaman of the highest caliber, engaging first in the coastwise trade in America and then extending his trade routes to ports overseas. This was the life into which Melatiah Kimball Chase was born and reared. Summing up her ancestors' contributions to New England maritime life, Chase writes,

While they sailed, they gave to their children and grandchildren the example as well as the knowledge of endurance and of courage, of resiliency after disaster, of satisfaction of playing a game with Fortune, provided one were well fortified by nature and by training for such a gamble. When they left the sea to enjoy their waning years in peace and relative prosperity, they brought to their homes and to their communities a perspective and a power of evaluation which has left its mark on succeeding

generations. The maritime life of America, particularly of New England which knew it best, gave its chief contribution to the country in the character of men whom it made. Its methods were ruthless, but its prophecies were sure. In these latter days one looks vainly for a worthy substitute (Chase, *Heritage* 27-28).

Melatiah, following his family's example at the young age of fifteen, went to sea, shipping, as the old expression goes, "before the mast"; by the time he had reached his twenty-fourth birthday, he was made first-mate of an ill-fated Blue Hill vessel named the *Sarah E. Snow*, carrying corn and other provisions to feed the Irish peasants suffering from the Potato Famine. The ship, caught in a sudden storm off the Irish coast on January 24, 1847, foundered and sank taking all hands, except Melatiah, with it. He watched helplessly as his younger brother, James Augusta Chase, the ship's second mate, was washed off the deck to his death. After staying some weeks in the destitute home of the Irish people who rescued him just before his capsized ship was flung onto the rocks by high wind and seas, Melatiah made his way back to Blue Hill in time for his own funeral. At that memorial service held in honor of the *Sarah E. Snow*'s lost crew, Melatiah saw Eliza Ann singing in the choir. He was made master of his own ship just two years later, and he and Eliza were married in the church where they first met soon thereafter.

Eliza Ann (Wescott) Chase, the daughter of John Wescott and Eliza (Lowell) Wescott, as already stated, was born in North Blue Hill, a small farming community located about five miles from Blue Hill proper. What we know of her paternal lineage comes from a distant Wescott cousin, the noted Maine genealogist, Elizabeth C. Wescott. Eliza (Wescott) Chase's great-grandfather, William Wescott, Sr., settled at "Magabaggaduce," now known as Castine, as early as 1761 (Wescott, *Maine Families*

3:297). He and his wife, Elizabeth Perkins, were natives of York, Maine. William Wescott was "a shipbuilder and master" and "kept a store on his wharf" at Castine (Wescott, *Maine Families* 3: 297). He served in the "Revolution and was once a prisoner of the British and served on the ship, *Tartar*" (Wescott, *Maine Families* 3: 297). His fourth child, William Wescott, Jr., was born in Castine on October 28, 1762; he married Margaret Haney, born at Penobscot on December 29, 1772, on April 7, 1785. They raised a family of thirteen children on a small farm in South Penobscot. Their tenth child, John, born May 20, 1805, was the father of Eliza Ann (Wescott) Chase. John's wife, Eliza Lowell, was the daughter of Josiah Lowell and his wife, Abigail (Bray) Lowell, who was born in Castine about 1800 and died in Bangor in 1869. The Lowell family in America originated with a Percival Lowell, yet another Puritan immigrant. He, born about 1571 in North Somerset, England, and later a merchant in Bristol, England, came to New England in 1639 with his wife, Rebecca, and a son, John. The Lowells originally settled in Newburyport, Massachusetts, before they and their descendants fanned out across the Northeast. Mary Ellen Chase's Lowell relatives were reportedly connected to the American poet, James Russell Lowell (R. M. Chase). Of Eliza (Wescott) Chase and her ancestry, her granddaughter writes that

in her own mind at least she was fortified at the start by a more distinguished ancestry than had been allotted to others of my progenitors. Wescotts had fought with William the Conqueror and thereby received titles and lands. They had some centuries later married with the Lyttletons and therefrom had added to their prestige. Her mother, too, in my grandmother's eager imagination had contributed not a little by being a Lowell of Cambridge; and although rumor had it that her branch of the family had not been held in the high regard attributed to those remaining in Massachusetts,

she herself was never known to admit that probability!
(Chase, *Heritage* 28-29).

It was through her grandmother and her aunt, Mary Dyer (Chase) Herrick, that Mary Ellen gained a working knowledge of her paternal ancestry. The stories Eliza told were stored away in her memory awaiting the time that she might put them down on paper. In her childhood, she was also privy to her aunt's literary example.

Mary Dyer (Chase) Herrick, writing for *The Bethel News*, recorded much of the material that Mary Ellen Chase would later incorporate and elaborate upon within her own works. Mary Herrick was the undisputed family genealogist and historian of her generation. Born in 1857, she witnessed, at a far closer proximity than did her niece, the changes in Blue Hill when the days of sail came to an end. She could remember when her father and mother left the sea; she could also remember when the first tourists began descending upon Blue Hill, buying up old homes, headlands and points. Mary Herrick also witnessed the summer people greedily gobbling up the precious antiques owned by those people who "followed the sea," changing completely the households they descended upon even as they filled the purses of the natives and consequently bolstered the local economy. As we will see in Mary Ellen's "novels about Maine," Mary Herrick, her mother, and the people they knew served as the impetus of Mary Ellen's own writing.

Hinckley-Wood / Lord

On her mother's side of the family, Mary Ellen Chase was descended from teachers, preachers, carpenters, and farmers. While she did not often interact with her maternal grandfather, John Newton Lord, and his second wife, Margaret (Fosset) Hibbard

Lord, the young Mary Ellen learned much about her mother's genealogy from her mother and her mother's many relatives living in and around Blue Hill. Mabel, the only child of an absent father and a dead mother, created her own closely-knit, extended family from the various aunts, uncles, and cousins nearby, a trait that she later passed along to her own children.

Mabel Chase, as I have mentioned earlier, was raised, after the death of her mother, Edith Wood (Hinckley) Lord, by her father's parents, Heard and Serena (Osgood) Lord. But, Mabel, like many other residents of Blue Hill, was forever proud that she could trace her heritage (in her case, through her late mother) to the earliest days of Blue Hill's history. Edith Wood (Hinckley) Lord was born in Blue Hill on January 2, 1837; she died in that town of consumption on March 5, 1875. She married John Newton Lord in Blue Hill on March 21, 1858. She was the daughter of Obed and Lousia (Cushing) Hinckley. Her father was the son of Nehemiah and Edith (Wood) Hinckley. Nehemiah was the son of Ebenezer Hinckley and his wife, Susannah (Brown) Hinckley, who came from Andover, Massachusetts, in 1766. Nehemiah's wife, Edith (Wood) Hinckley, was the daughter of Joseph and Ruth (Haskell) Wood, the first settlers of Blue Hill. Edith Hinckley also had the distinction of being "the first white child . . . born on the shores of Blue Hill Bay" (Chase, *Heritage* 17). Mary Ellen Chase, in tribute to these maternal forbears, writes

Joseph Wood, that squatter on land not his own, was my great-great-great-grandfather. The distinction, cannot be termed rare since many another through his numerous children and grand-children can claim a like honour. As in every isolated pioneer settlement, so in his. His sons and his daughters married the daughters and sons of his neighbors, until after five generations the process of

untangling the same thread, woven and interwoven through various families, is a major operation.

That my great-great grandmother, Edith Wood, was the first white child to be born on the shores of Blue Hill Bay is likewise an honour which I must share with scores, yea, with hundreds of her descendants. Large families in the eighteenth century New England were the rule, the word being interpreted rather in the nature of an unwritten law than merely of a custom. One not only contributed to the future needs of a new settlement by such production within the home, but served the Lord as well. Ten, twelve, even fifteen children excited only admiration; and parents with but a paltry five or six to their credit were called into question on the grounds not only of hardihood and normality but of duty. Nevertheless, widespread as is the honour, it is yet cherished; and the name *Edith* has been handed down in many families, my mother and my sister alike still bearing it with pride (Chase, *Heritage* 18).

When Chase writes of the difficulty in “untangling the same thread woven and interwoven through various families,” she indeed knows what she is saying. A mere perusal of Rufus Candage’s *Historical Sketches of Blue Hill*, the first book dealing exclusively with the history and genealogy of Blue Hill and the surrounding area, bears witness to Chase’s assertion. To Joseph and Ruth Wood there were born some fifteen children, who, indeed, married the sons and daughters of the other nearby settlers. In this second generation, families rarely if ever produced less than ten children who, in their own turn, married other people very near at hand. By the time of Mary Ellen Chase’s birth in 1887, the Woods through their marriages to the Hinckleys, Clossons, Carters, Holts, Osgoods, and a dozen other early families, in all probability numbered in the several hundreds.

The Lord family was by no means as fruitful in terms of numbers as the Woods and Hinckleys. What this family lacked in sheer figures, it made up for in achievements

and creative energy. Mary Ellen Chase's Lord lineage began in this country with Nathan Lord, Sr.. He and his family came to New England sometime in the early seventeenth century, settling north of Boston, probably in the vicinity of Salem. Little is known of Mary Ellen's branch of the family until in the fifth generation, Captain Isaac Lord, born and baptized in South Berwick, Maine, in 1750, married Abigail Milliken of Scarboro. In 1773, soon after their marriage, Isaac and Abigail removed to the Union River, now Ellsworth, where they bought five acres from Abigail's father, Benjamin Milliken. An aged Abraham Lord, probably Isaac's father, witnessed the signing of this deed dated at Union River on September 25, 1773. Abigail was reportedly the first white female to arrive in the new settlement. To this couple there were born eight sons before they removed to the nearby settlement of Surry. Their second son, Benjamin Lord, born in 1778, married Mary Means. They lived for several years in Surry; Benjamin, later hired as a ship carpenter by Captain George Stevens, relocated his family to Blue Hill. He, with the help of his employer and others, was instrumental in the founding of the Blue Hill Baptist Church in 1806. In his later life, Benjamin was ordained a Baptist minister and conducted missionary work among the isolated coastal settlements of eastern Washington County, Maine. He died on September 19, 1841, and was buried in the Lord family plot in Surry Village. Heard Lord, born in Surry in 1806, the second child of Benjamin and Mary, came with his parents to Blue Hill as a small child. He was a house joiner by trade and also worked as a cobbler and as an itinerant schoolteacher. He married in Blue Hill, Serena Osgood, daughter of Daniel Osgood and Sarah (Smith) Osgood, on July 14, 1833. Heard Lord served as clerk of the Blue Hill Baptist Church

for thirty-three years. Of her great-great grandfather and her great-grandfather, Mary

Ellen Chase states that

Perhaps the best record of this stern doer of the Word, [Benjamin Lord] . . . is read in his son . . . Heard Lord, born in 1806 and destined to become at once the corner-stone and the pillar of the Baptist Church, organized that very year in Blue Hill. Whether his quaint name was given him in hope and in prophecy, no one can say; surely he not only heard the Lord but hearkened unto Him. My mother, whom he took into his home upon the early death of her mother and the subsequent removal of her father to Massachusetts, has seen to it that his life and character have not passed into oblivion.

He himself was of no small education. Largely self-taught and an omnivorous reader, he was known not only in his community but elsewhere as a man of parts. While still in his twenties, he became a schoolmaster and spent the greater part of his long life in teaching the village schools along the coast of eastern Maine . . . To add further to his support and to that of his family, from whom he was necessarily absent for long periods, he taught singing-schools in the evenings, instructing his students "how to render those noble hymns of Mr. Isaac Watts and upon occasion a few lighter, harmless melodies much to their taste." He was also, as occasion offered and necessity demanded, both a carpenter and a shoemaker, always carrying with him his chest of tools and a supply of leather. To the year of his death in 1887 he fashioned his own shoes and those of his immediate family.

The too few letters which have been preserved testify to his interests and anxieties. He is concerned over the uncertainty of his son, my grandfather, "as regards his conversion," but is relieved by his apparent industry; he writes of a ten-mile walk mostly at night "to relieve the passing and to strengthen the faith of a former student dying of brain fever"; he is distressed over the rise in prices at the time of the Civil War but far more distressed over the dishonesty of a country shop-keeper, whom he must needs fear "to be a backslider from his profession" (Chase, *Heritage* 21).

Heard and his wife were the parents of two sons: John Newton Lord, Mary Ellen Chase's unrepentant grandfather, and Thomas Newton Lord, a Baptist missionary, preacher, and college professor who took the Baptist gospel, and his grandfather Lord's unremitting example, to Alhambra, California. Heard Lord's older brother, Thomas M. Lord, also a carpenter, was well known throughout eastern Maine as a designer and a builder of ships, homes, and churches. He was born in Surry on February 16, 1805, and died in Blue Hill on September 16, 1898. He married Matilda Carleton, granddaughter of Moses and Mary (Webster) Carleton, early settlers of Blue Hill, on October 24, 1833. They were the parents of three children: Roscoe Granville, Ellen Matilda, and Sarah Cole. Roscoe Granville married Caroline McFarland, and Sarah Cole married James Henry Morse. Of the three Thomas Lord offspring, Roscoe Granville, Sarah Cole, and their spouses later became the featured subjects of Mary Ellen Chase's autobiographical writings.

John Newton Lord through his second marriage to Margaret (Fosset) Hibbard provided his only daughter, Mabel, with a stepbrother and stepsister, George Hibbard and Elizabeth "Lizzie" Hibbard. Although the three were never raised together in the same household, Mabel Chase developed an affectionate relationship with each. Whatever became of the stepbrother, George Hibbard, is at this time a complete and utter mystery. Family legend suggests that he may have migrated to the West. More, however, is known of his sister. Lizzie Hibbard married William Henry Darling, the son of Anson and Eliza (Long) Darling, grandson of Samuel and Hannah (Osgood) Darling, and great-grandson of the early settlers, Jonathan and Hannah (Holt) Darling. Lizzie (Hibbard) Darling, or "Aunt Do," as she was called, and her husband, William Henry Darling, or

“Uncle Hen,” were favorites of the Chase children, and they also figure prominently in Mary Ellen Chase’s literature about family and family connections.

Mary Ellen Chase believed, as indicated by her choice of Psalm 16:6 as an epigram to *A Goodly Heritage*, that “the [genealogical] lines” had “fallen to [her] in pleasant places.” The goodly New England heritage into which she was born enabled her “not to draw a moral but to paint a picture” of a past which never could die so long as she remembered it and tried realistically to recreate it (Chase, *Heritage* 7). To remember this past, of course, Chase had to remember all those people, her ancestors, who had part in shaping it and her. As we will see as we look at and analyze her autobiographies and her Maine novels, this is exactly what Chase set out to do. Her genealogy, her goodly heritage, rightfully demanded that she, “instead of regretting [that] the past was gone . . . regard it as a fine thing to move on from” (Chase, “Noble History”). This she did—saying all the while that “a noble history . . . cherishes [the] past, transmutes [this past] with all its gifts into the present, [and] reminds her children of their heritage” (Chase, “Noble History”).

THE LITERARY WORKS

Early on her literary career, Mary Ellen Chase wrote two popular novels aimed at a young female audience. *The Girl from the Big Horn Country*, published in 1916, and its sequel, *Virginia of Elk Creek Valley*, published in 1917, explore the similarities and differences of New Englanders and their Western contemporaries. The plot of each novel, thematically reminiscent of Owen Wister's *The Virginian*, is simple and basic enough in its construction. In *The Girl from the Big Horn Country*, Virginia Hunter, the main character of both books, leaves her home in Wyoming to enroll in a New England boarding school in her late mother's native Vermont. She experiences her share of difficulties in her new environment but manages to make lasting friendships with several girls who attend school with her. In the sequel, these New England friends are invited at the end of the school year to spend a two-month vacation at Virginia's ranch in the Elk Creek Valley of Wyoming. Each of the two groups offers its perceptions of the other. The New Englanders at times think the West too modern and progressive in its outlook; the Westerners find New England too old-fashioned and stodgy.

Chase, a New Englander transplanted first to the Midwest and later to the Far West, takes an interesting look in these two novels at "environment and tradition" in relation to people hailing from two vastly different regions of the country (Chase, "Noble History"). For her work in these novels, she was criticized, interestingly enough, for portraying fellow New Englanders in "a rather artificial stuffiness which belongs more to the stereotyped conception of those [people] outside of New England than to one born and bred within it" (Dodge 8). This accusation is based, in large part, upon Chase's employment of genealogy as a notable theme. Her New England characters consider a

good genealogy a necessity of life; her Western characters, while they admire noble heritage, consider genealogy only a help. In a conversation between Priscilla Winthrop, a Vermont schoolgirl, and Donald Keith, a Wyoming ranch hand, Chase's genealogical theme finds its full expression:

"*Courage is my heritage*," translated Priscilla proudly. "It's our family coat-of-arms, and that's the motto. We've had it for years and years, ever since the War of the Roses. A Winthrop was shield-bearer for Edward, Duke of York, and Grandfather used to say we could be traced back to the Norman Conquest."

"I see," said Donald politely, but with something very like amusement in his blue eyes. "You New England folks are strong on crests and mottoes and that sort of thing, aren't you?"

"No more than we should be," announced Priscilla a little haughtily, "We are the oldest families for the most part, and I think we ought to remember all those things about our ancestors. It's—it's very—stimulating. The West is so excited over progress and developing the country and all that," she finished a little disdainfully, "that it doesn't care about family traditions or—or anything like that."

"Oh, I don't know," returned Donald. "It isn't so bad as that. We think a fine family history is a splendid thing. I venture I'm as proud of my Scotch forefathers as you are of the Duke of York's shield-bearer, though we haven't any coat-of-arms, and never did have any, I guess. Only back there you think it's a necessity to have a good ancestry, and out here we just consider it a help . . . It isn't what you come from, it's what you are, and what you can do" (Chase, *Virginia* 252-253).

Here Donald Keith expresses Chase's own Humanistic view of genealogy and heritage.

She asserts her "faith not only in the durability of a tradition but also in the Emersonian law of compensation . . . that spirit [truly] transcends matter; out of defeat comes victory;

out of ugliness, beauty; out of discouragement, courage” (Westbrook, 27). Out of the dim but noble Past, in Chase’s own estimation, comes a meaningful Present and a hopeful Future. And, although she, like Priscilla Winthrop, was justly proud of her New England heritage and felt she should remember her ancestors, she did not think that heritage alone could define one’s place in the world. Being the descendant of New England pioneers did not keep her in Maine; being raised within her ancestors’ Puritan tradition did not stop her from questioning beliefs she found both odious and disturbing. For Chase, the past, the sum-total of one’s heritage, was the all-important point of beginning or departure—the something or somewhere to move on from. She believed, as Donald Keith says, that people may be proud of their heritage, but in the end, their own initiative and their own deeds will define who and what they eventually become. Heritage, if it is worth anything at all, will provide an “imperishable value” that when “handed on to the minds of . . . children, in ideas and ideals,” will inspire them to lead lives worthy of their noble past “even though in the course of time [and through the exertions of succeeding generations the original imperishable value] may assume another form” (Chase, “Noble History”).

Chase’s heritage assumed many other forms through her literary exertions. As she grew and matured as an artist, she was able to look upon her own past and see clearly the intangible assets it had given her: a positive “respect for hard work, personal integrity, loyalty to friends and family and ideals, humility, and self-reliance” (Westbrook, 27). These assets, both personal and artistic, are outlined in the author’s three autobiographical works—*A Goodly Heritage*, *A Goodly Fellowship*, and *The White Gate*—and in her first two Maine novels—*Mary Peters* and *Silas Crockett*.

The Autobiographies

Mary Ellen Chase's three autobiographies cover a period spanning fifty years, beginning with her birth in 1887 and ending with her teaching career at Smith College in 1939. *A Goodly Heritage*, published in 1932, tells of the author's ancestral background and her early life in Blue Hill, Maine. *A Goodly Fellowship*, published in 1939, is considered by many to be a sequel to *A Goodly Heritage*, chronicling Chase's life as a student, teacher, and college professor. Many of the materials contained in this second autobiography are reworkings of and elaborations upon the earlier materials outlining her early education in Blue Hill and her choice of a teaching career as found within *A Goodly Heritage*. *The White Gate: Adventures in the Imagination of a Child*, published in 1954, covers Chase's life from the age of nine to the age of thirteen, "those glimpses of reality and perceptions of wisdom, which in the long succession of dimly remembered days are in the life of a child like the flashing of fireflies in the darkness" (Chase, *White Gate* 10). Chase's sister, Mildred Hinckley, called this particular collection of autobiographical essays "the truest of [the author's] books" (Dodge 357). For the purpose of this study, *A Goodly Fellowship* and *The White Gate*, will be used to further explain or delineate information already provided by the author in *A Goodly Heritage*.

When *A Goodly Heritage* first appeared in 1932, Mary Ellen Chase, by that time an up and coming academic star at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, was forty-five years old. At the middle of her life, she wished to take time to reflect upon her upbringing and heritage, as Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, had recorded those aspects of her life and the life of her husband some three hundred and fifty years before. Chase, like Cavendish, was concerned that she was perhaps presumptuous in

thinking that readers would be at all interested in the life of a woman who had not even reached her fiftieth birthday. Nevertheless, setting her reluctance and New England reserve aside, Mary Ellen Chase followed Cavendish's lead, saying in her "Prologue" to *A Goodly Heritage*, "It is safe to say that not a little of the independence of 'Mad Madge of Newcastle' solaces the spirits and guides the hands of us who would write of our own humours and fortunes" (3). By choosing "Mad Madge" as her directing spirit and muse, Chase, drawing a striking parallel between Cavendish's time and her own, sets the overall tone of her book:

Like Margaret Cavendish, therefore, who, continuing her madness, published at the age of forty-three her life of the "thrice Noble, High, and Puissant" Duke, her husband, and doubtless as "ridiculous," as Pepys and others of that century found her, in any thought that these records of a past age may be of interest and worth except to myself and those immediately connected with me, I begin at the same age to write of Maine seacoast life and influences as I knew them in the twenty-five or thirty years preceding the Great War. I write like her, largely for my own sake, partly in gratitude to the gods who set me in pleasant places and gave me such a goodly heritage, and partly in the hope that these accurate sketches of New England people and places, religion, industry, and education may prove of interest to readers of like tradition and experience.

For we live, indeed, in a New World. By the invention and perfection of manifold engines, which have revolutionized transportation alike on land and on sea, by the mechanization and consequent spread of industry, by the inevitable internationalism of outlook which has followed in the wake of the Great War, the face of American life has become as completely divorced from the period of which I write as were the late years of the fifteenth century divorced from the former by the invention of printing. The parallelism is, perhaps, not a poor one. For as suddenly as the early presses converted an old world into a new, so suddenly has the widespread use of motors of every sort abandoned a relatively stable past for a hurrying present.

The young of this new age, having no perspective and believing in the only time they know, are unconscious of any revolution (6).

Chase saw within the automation and mechanization of the twentieth century a revolution as drastic and dramatic as that of the first printing press: “For the purpose of [*A Goodly Heritage*] is not to relate the events of a [particular] life, but to paint a picture of a time now nearly obscured in the maelstrom of mechanical invention, industrial growth, and a fast moving war affected generation” (Hillman 3). This modern “maelstrom” quickly changed how twentieth-century people felt about themselves, their future, and their localities of origin. “The relatively stable past” gave way to “the hurrying present” in such a short time that most of Chase’s own generation found themselves in a “New World,” both foreign and surreal, before they realized what had happened. But, in this new world “the multitude of middle-aged . . . formed by the thirty years before the War” had to “yet live, think, and work . . . contributing . . . the sum-total of [their] assets [to] a new era” (7). Chase, wanting to see how the past she knew could inform the national culture, began writing *A Goodly Heritage* in hopes that “an honest presentation of the ideas and ideals under which so many millions . . . were reared” might “serve to entertain those to whom that past [was] still memorable, [and might] serve to amuse and to surprise those who [would] never know it” (6-8). And while she believed the printing press brought fifteenth and sixteenth-century people together through the easy dissemination of knowledge, Chase feared that the revolution to which she and her generation were privy was spawning widespread alienation, estrangement, laziness, and apathy within American society.

Mary Ellen Chase struck a positive chord in *A Goodly Heritage*, which ensured the book's popularity and longevity. Critics and scholars around the country hailed the book as an unqualified success. Evelyn Dodge states that Chase's "positive attitude is at one and the same time the prevailing spirit of the book and also a part of the heritage which she finds goodly" (163). Her "accurate sketches of New England people and places, religion, industry, and education" were admired as a study in American social history (5): "*A Goodly Heritage* retains a surprising air of authenticity, and, to my mind, could be better judged a history" (Hall 106). Robert P. T. Coffin, a fellow Maine native, gives Chase the greatest credit and praise when he writes:

In these days when Yahooism is too often mistaken for good health in literature, and well people are often represented as a little lower than the beasts, a book like *A Goodly Heritage* is a timely reminder that we are really, as we believed as recently as two decades ago, only a little lower than the angels. Here is life, simple as a Maine house and as subtle and complete as a Greek temple . . . One puts down this book with the reassurance that order is a law of being, that humor can be more than a guffaw, and that American living, even of a very modest sort, has been the chief American art (7).

Coffin saw within *A Goodly Heritage* a hopeful return to American optimism as it was known in the years immediately preceding World War I. The "Yahooism . . . often mistaken for good health in literature" of which he speaks in his review most certainly refers to the post-war or "Lost Generation" of American writers found in the 1920s.

F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ezra Pound, M. C. Mencken, and T. S. Eliot would have been at odds with Mary Ellen Chase, Coffin thought, for they were far too willing to place humankind below the beasts.

From Chase's Humanistic point of view, the American people, despite the ravages of the war they had just witnessed or the loneliness of the urban culture they were quickly creating, still possessed the mental and spiritual resources to reestablish optimism as a distinctive national trait, placing themselves once more just "a little below the angels." She termed herself "a desperate optimist" after the fashion of fellow Mainer, Edward Arlington Robinson (Westbrook 160). She held that "man too infrequently lives up to his almost limitless spiritual potential in his daily existence" (Westbrook 160). But humanity could live up to its full potential if it would intelligently glean lessons and morals from the past. In order for humanity—as the master of its own destiny—to know where it was headed, it needed to first know where it had been. Chase subsequently and rightfully asks in her "Prologue," "Was the outlook of 1890, of 1900, of 1910, particularly in their social aspects, saner and more reliable than that of 1930?" (7). She then answers her own question with, "Time and time alone can probably answer such questions" (7). Although this seems an evasion of the subject, Chase believed that time had already rendered the "reassurance that order is the law of being" for all those people able to reflect upon their past and willing to incorporate that past into their daily lives in new and meaningful ways. She says at the conclusion of her "Prologue," "Rather would I seize upon what made an age distinctive than attempt to present that age as a palliative or as an example to a different present" (8). The distinctive feature of the age Chase presents in *A Goodly Heritage* was its optimism and its belief in the betterment of humanity through the tried and true—family, work, education, and spirituality. Chase could not change the post-war situation, but she did offer some observations of a past "life, simple as a Maine house and as subtle and complete as a Greek temple" that might

prove to be a point of departure for her fellow Americans, perhaps inspiring them to live better and saner lives through adherence to time-tested truths.

Perry Westbrook, writing some thirty-three years after the publication of *A Goodly Heritage*, best sums up Chase's stance when he says,

The popularity of the book, which was immediate and lasting, results in part from its style, which is vivid and informal and good-naturedly ironic, and from the interesting and likeable people who come alive on its pages. Yet, in a great degree, its appeal must stem from the desire felt by so many moderns for exactly the emotional and intellectual security Mary Ellen Chase reports as being typical of village life in New England in the [late nineteenth] century. So long as civilization teeters on the brink, as it has done through two world wars and a depression and is doing in the present nuclear arms race, this book will make seductive reading. But any one designating *A Goodly Heritage* as an escapist work is inaccurate. It does not transport the reader into a land that never did and never can exist; rather, it deals with what was once the norm, and is still a very real potential, in American life (25).

Westbrook, of course, is writing here during the idealistic days of the 1960s, a time when changes for the better again seemed both possible and attainable. This fact, however, does not negate his accurate assessment of Chase's book. *A Goodly Heritage* was intended to spur a return to the "emotional and intellectual security," or contentment, of former times, not as a "palliative" or "seduction" of the modern generation, but as "a very real [and] potential" reprieve from the American restlessness and despair so evident throughout most of the twentieth century. Evelyn Dodge states that "whatever future ages may learn from the examination of this particular past, it must not be overlooked that this past was to Miss Chase something to be used—to be used, it may be added, with true Yankee

ingenuity and sure New England thrift” (165). As Chase herself writes, “When I had done and entered upon college teaching, I found, like all others of my age and generation, a new civilization in which to live and work, converting whatever had been of value throughout a relatively stable past into capital for a new and unstable present” (294). Chase, and all those Americans like her, sought ways to thrive in this new civilization, living and working to find within the values of the past, pertinent and useful solutions to their modern problems and perplexities. Addressing her peers, she says “Surely the lines fell unto us in pleasant places meet to prepare us for the Newest of worlds, [and] . . . the wise among us will seize upon whatsoever things are here and now of good report because of their larger honesty and justice, cultivating meanwhile from the gifts tendered especially unto ourselves a merry relinquishment as well as a larger understanding” (298). Chase ultimately envisioned a new American culture constructed out of the best of both worlds, merrily relinquishing the encumbrances of the past with the larger understanding that that particular past still contained hopeful elements useful to a fast-paced, modern society.

If Chase’s pervading optimism in America and American culture sets the tone of *A Goodly Heritage*, her “interesting and likeable people who come alive on its pages” serve as thematic examples of “American living, even of a very modest sort . . . [as] the chief American art.” Optimism, of course, is not created in a vacuum; it is the product of a well-centered humanity believing in and striving for the best within itself. Mary Ellen Chase goes far back into her heritage to make this point everywhere evident, showing the development of her family and town, her State and nation, through “the realization that out of simple beginnings, by toil, by adaptation to circumstances, and by seizure of

occasions, one generation can give rise to a better” (16). A reader cannot read Chase without first understanding that all her progenitors together with their sacrifices and their gifts were responsible in a great degree for the development of her Humanism—the optimistic outlook and positive artistic bent which she possessed in abundance.

Chase discusses the lives and contributions of her forebears and their contemporaries in conjunction with the creation of their simple society and culture—a society and culture, we should certainly understand, which permeated her very existence while growing up in Blue Hill. Joseph Wood, the founder of the town, was her great-great-grandfather; her mother spoke of him and his many descendants. The Reverend Jonathan Fisher had pastored the church she attended each Sunday and had established the high school she so proudly claimed as Alma Mater; her grandmother knew him personally and sang in the choir at his funeral. Benjamin Lord, her great-great-grandfather, the Baptist thorn in the Congregationalist side of “Father Fisher,” helped to steal the sheep away from the old parson’s spiritual fold; Mary Ellen knew his grandson, her third cousin and next door neighbor, Roscoe Granville Lord. Melatiah Kimball Chase, her sea captain grandfather, sailed the world over, extending his mind and the minds of his descendants to every port of importance around the globe; again, her grandmother, the faithful wife who accompanied him for ten years on these far voyages, never let her grandchildren forget for a moment who and what he was and where he came from.

It is no wonder then that Chase once told a friend, “There is only one book I have written which is worth anything at all, and that is *A Goodly Heritage*” (Hillman 3). The sentiment behind this statement is at least obvious to those readers who are acquainted

with Chase and with the book. She was by no means an escapist or dreamer trying desperately to retreat into the past merely for a sense of comfort and solace. By writing *A Goodly Heritage*, her contentment came in the flooding abundance of the “valued memories raised into [her] consciousness” once more (Dodge 166). Chase recalls in vivid detail the members of her extended family and their respective influences upon her early life. She explains her genealogical descent while pointing to her ancestors’ direct and indirect contributions to her life: “Miss Chase is strong on portraying the qualities that hard working, honest, intelligent ancestry [has] passed on to [its] descendants” (Hillman 4). Thus, Chase covers in *A Goodly Heritage* the social amenities of her family and its hometown, the Puritan tradition as she came to know it, the seafaring tradition of Maine and New England, and the educational ideals and practices she was subjected to as a child. In each of these related and overlapping areas, Chase excels in her tranquil and humorous diffusion of her personal knowledge, creating “an engrossing and, at times, amazing narrative of the life in what still remained in many respects a pioneer community” (Train 204). She is neither didactic, pedantic, nor preachy about the life or people she recalls, but she truly rises to her best when she discusses her family and its own connections to each of these weighty subjects.

In addition to her parents and their contributions to her life and art, there are three other persons who play instrumental roles in Mary Ellen Chase’s recollections in *A Goodly Heritage*. The first person is her paternal grandmother, Eliza (Wescott) Chase; the second is the wife of Mabel Chase’s second cousin, Caroline “Aunt Cad” (McFarland) Lord; and the third is her mother’s stepsister, Elizabeth “Aunt Do” (Hibbard) Darling. All three women were products of the Blue Hill area and were noted

within village society for their enthusiasm for life and their independence of thought. Each woman in her own way provided a positive influence on Chase's intellectual and spiritual development—in the end impacting the creation of her literature.

Mary Ellen Chase cannot lavish enough praise on her paternal grandmother, Eliza (Wescott) Chase. This incredible woman occupies perhaps the most prominent and moving place in *A Goodly Heritage* as well as Chase's overall literary canon. She, as Elienne Squire relates, was "the greatest single influence on Mary's life . . . her stories provided a rich harvest for fiction," and as Chase relates her grandmother's life-story, readers see that Eliza Chase as an outspoken, independent woman with great vigor and abounding energy who was born, sadly enough, several decades before her own time (20). Of her, we learn that

[At home in Blue Hill] as on shipboard were made manifest that tireless energy, that resiliency from ill fortune, that extraordinary youthfulness, which quickened all her days until she died at eighty-seven and which brightened even the stillness of her face in death . . . One suspected her of being unable to tell the exact truth, much as she extolled it, her regard for it being at all times aesthetic and dramatic rather than intrinsic. But with all delight in the experiences with which she had been favoured, she retained a breadth of vision which kept her horizons wide and clear. Her eyes, though they shone with excitement over the Sargasso Sea, shone also with larger desire for the future of her children [and grandchildren]. . . The God she believed in was perforce an exciting Deity, who performed stupendous miracles at sea and less appealing ones on shore. Puritanism was surely not native to her temperament; but it had been too well ingrafted in her early years for her ever entirely to escape its clutches. She talked much about "that straight and narrow path that leadeth unto life" and outwardly travelled it in the most seemly fashion. Inwardly she scaled easier and more delectable mountains. For an hour every Sunday morning she "meditated" in secret, allowing no interruption to avert or to disturb her

devotions. Yet the conviction of those who knew her best, that her thoughts were quite as often in Cadiz as in Heaven, was not to be gainsaid (34).

Eliza, as we know from the Wescott-Lowell genealogy, was a child born into poverty; she overcame this obstacle and was celebrated throughout her life as the keeper of family knowledge and wisdom “which her fervent, cherishing nature did not allow [her descendants] for one moment to forget” (202). Her childhood was typical of any farm child born in early nineteenth-century New England. Hard work was the norm, and children were expected to perform certain tasks if the family was to survive. We are told that on her tenth birthday, while her parents were in Blue Hill Village procuring supplies, Eliza, the oldest child in a family then consisting of six children, cooked a large dinner for her siblings and two hired-hands, churned ten pounds of butter, did all the other necessary housework, and found time to fashion a new suit for her five year old brother out of an old coat discarded by her father. This story seems hyperbolic in the extreme, one of the instances where the eager Mary Ellen perhaps, like her grandmother before her, did not allow the “exact” or “intrinsic” truth to interfere with the drama or aesthetics of a good story. Be that as it may, family history does record that Eliza, by the time she was fifteen, had established herself as a midwife of some renown in and around Blue Hill (W. W. Hinckley). Two years later, with money earned in midwifery, she apprenticed herself to a tailor in the frontier town of Bangor, some thirty-five miles away. After two years in that place, Eliza returned to her home in Blue Hill as a seamstress, sewing “for twenty-five cents a day” in “families more affluent than her own” (Squire 19).

Although born into small town life, Eliza (Wescott) Chase refused to be hemmed in by her provincial surroundings or to relinquish her feisty personality in deference to authority. She has been called “the first Blue Hill bluestocking,” a term denoting intelligence as well as independence that would have certainly raised the collective eyebrows of her old hometown had been it used during her lifetime (W. W. Hinckley). She possessed an active mind, and she did not regret to inform others of this fact. Mary Ellen Chase outlined her grandmother’s early life, but it was Eliza’s life at sea, with its share of travel, peril, and exposure to other cultures, which greatly inspired the author’s imagination. And, for very good reason. Eliza Chase was, as her granddaughter says, one of those women whose “fortune [from the beginning] seemed governed by peculiarly exciting stars . . . [and] one of those . . . blessed individuals who seemed born to have things happen to them, who attract experiences as a magnet attracts steel” (28). Just three weeks after her wedding to Melatiah Kimball Chase in 1849, Eliza Chase boarded her husband’s ship, *The Bride*, on a routine trip between Blue Hill and New Orleans. The newlyweds made honeymoon stops in both Boston and New York to celebrate their nuptials with Melatiah’s many acquaintances and fellow mariners. They then left New York for Louisiana and four days out of port, in the vicinity of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, ran headlong into a tropical storm that eventually drove their ship to the bottom of the sea. Mary Ellen Chase, recalling her grandmother’s musings, describes the harrowing scene:

After four days at sea there occurred that colossal event, to which so many hours of my childhood were blissfully dedicated. Somewhere off Hatteras *The Bride* encountered a fearful gale. It rose suddenly without sufficient warning. At five one morning my grandmother was aroused in her

berth by the appearance of my grandfather armed with a pair of his own woollen stockings and a sailor's peajacket and trousers. She would best get into these, he said, as he scented trouble. My grandmother told us how she was sitting filled with fear on the edge of her berth drawing on a woollen stocking when the ship capsized, how she completed her strange costuming at a stranger angle. She was carried on the deck, now careening perilously above the engulfing waters, and lashed to a mast. There she remained for thirty-six black hours while the wind tore away the rigging and mountainous seas tore away her clothing. She told us of confusion unutterable, the screams of the sailors, the snapping and creaking of the ship, the cursing and the prayers. She told us of the frightful, suffocating impact of multitudinous waves, smiting the breath from her body, of intolerable suffering from hunger and cold and the more intolerable anguish, as the hours went on, from chafed and smarting flesh. We knew the deafness which saddened sixty years of her life began with those monstrous seas as they washed over her head. Long before a British barque bore down upon them, fears of death had given place to an ardent desire for it (212-213).

One can only imagine the fear Eliza faced in her experience aboard the ill-fated ship, but it is indeed a testament to her stamina, resiliency, and determination that she ever decided to go to sea again. She, in the words of Sarah Orne Jewett, was one of those people who “had it hard in their youth, and were bound to make the most of themselves before they died” (19). Eliza Chase, “like many another woman of her generation who had chosen to marry a sailor, chose also to stay by him whatever the cost” (215). And, this is exactly what she did. That she enjoyed much of her seafaring life seems self-evident: “She read and sewed on the quarter deck in the sun of many foreign harbours; she lingered in foreign cities; she looked alike upon Moorish mosques and Gothic cathedrals” (215). With great humor and insight, she related the stories of her travels to anyone who was

inclined to listen to them, most especially her daughter, Mary Dyer (Chase) Herrick, and her second granddaughter, Mary Ellen.

Eliza Chase's stories of distant ports and exotic cultures enlivened the otherwise even and circumscribed lives of her grandchildren. She had seen enough of the world to recognize that her own native parish was only a miniscule part of the enticing, inviting whole, and she certainly widened her horizons and broadened her perspectives in this realization. "One cannot ask a better legacy" Chase writes, "than such a [sea-going] life affords, both to itself and to those who are reared upon it long effects" (215). Eliza's life at sea taught her and her descendants many valuable lessons, not the least being that religion should be considered a comparative and relative subject. While she talked of and "outwardly travelled" the "straight and narrow way" as defined by Protestant doctrine, she noted how other religious cultures and spiritual paths were at least as worthy as her own: as "she looked alike upon Moorish mosques and Gothic cathedrals, she tempered her Puritan inheritance with amiable and welcome leaven" (215). Given her time and religious tradition, she did indeed need all that this "world of wider thinking . . . [and] humours tranquillity" could provide (Chase, *Fellowship* 21).

The Wescott and Lowell families, like all the families who settled in the Blue Hill area, were orthodox in their Congregational beliefs; the laws and traditions of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and after 1820, the State of Maine, required nothing less of its inhabitants. As members of the founding "good Protestant families," the names of many of Eliza Chase's progenitors and relatives—the Wescotts, Lowells, Brays, and Haneyes—and those of her husband—the Chases, Kimballs, Bartletts—appear upon the earliest Congregational membership rolls in Hancock County. These people subscribed

as a matter of public and religious duty to the Sixteen Articles of the Congregational Confession of Faith. These articles, by way of condensation and abbreviation, state and

affirm the existence of one God, “infinite, eternal, and unchangeable,” the infallibility of the Scriptures, Old and New, the total depravity of the human creature, “which descends naturally to all his posterity,” the immutable truth of Divine Election, the free offering of salvation, determined always by the absolute necessity of a change of heart and a re-birth in Christ, the Divine Ordination of the Sacraments of Baptism and of the Lord’s Supper, infant baptism, provided one parent or both are in full communion of the visible Church, the resurrection of both Just and unjust, and the Day of Judgement “when the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment and the righteous into Life Eternal” (Chase, *Fisher* 75).

These tenets of faith, based upon Richard Mather’s *Cambridge Platform* and in formal use at least as early as 1648, governed the Congregational Christian Churches of New England well into the twentieth century. The Reverend Jonathan Fisher and his fellow ministers interpreted this doctrinal statement in the most conservative of fashions during the first quarter of Eliza Chase’s lifetime. Fisher, an old-time Puritan hard-liner until his death in 1847, stressed the preferred position of Congregationalists as the “elect of God,” and thus believed that these people would hopefully enter into eternal bliss, providing they had remained worthy and blameless until their own respective ends, while the heathens, apparently everyone outside “the Established Church,” would be tormented in Hell forever. In a sermon typical of his time and religious faith, the fervent Fisher states that

In Isaiah 27:4 God challenges: *Who would set the briars and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together.* Those who revolt against God he here compares to a fire which must consume them as the

dry, withered briars and thorns are consumed by the burning flame. We, my dear hearers, are all involved as transgressors of Divine Law. How shall we escape the consuming justice of the Most High? God will not trifle with us, nor will he let the course of his justice suffer . . . My dear impenitent hearers, do you try to escape the truth that bye and bye the delay of your punishment will be at an end and that you will have judgement without mercy? When God makes inquiry for blood, will he not remember you? . . . *Our God is a consuming fire.* My dear hearers, there is no way to escape Divine Justice at the great day. I will briefly describe its course according to the light of the Scriptures: Bye and bye God will send you a summons. It will call you to his bar. Death, natural death, will be the messenger. When your souls have departed the body, they appear before the throne of God. They will be subjected to a measure of inquiry. Being found the transgressors of Divine Law, your never dying spirits will be sent into a world of spirits, into that place where the rich man, mentioned in the Scriptures, lifted up his eyes being in torment. Your souls will then feel a relation in every part of this body they now inhabit, an exquisite torment as it were in every member . . . Material fire like salt will constantly penetrate and torment, but *never* decompose or annihilate your bodies . . . Can you endure the thought of falling, world without end, under this dreadful vengeance? Here in the present state you shrink from the scorching heat of the touch of fire; yea, the disease of one member, an aching tooth, a pounded finger, discompose your spirits, drive you almost to distraction. How will you endure to be destroyed both soul and body in Hell? I desire you to understand your danger, the dreadfulness of the distress you risk . . . I desire you to ponder upon this; therefore it is that I bring before you the same interesting subject so frequently . . . *For our God is a consuming fire!* (Chase, Fisher 118).

We, of course, cannot know how often Eliza Chase was subjected to such lengthy and ominous religious discourses, but this particular hellfire and damnation sermon, preached some eighteen months before her birth in 1827, was obviously standard fare for the Blue Hill Congregationalists of that time. Fisher, as he admits in his conclusion to this

diatribe, brought “the same interesting subject” before his parishioners “frequently.”

Such sermons were written with no hidden agenda or secret purpose; they were composed and delivered, with something like old-time Calvinistic gusto of the Mathers of old Boston, to inculcate a spiritual fear into the unrepentant listeners—a spiritual fear that was intended to result in a serious and heart-felt spiritual conversion.

Through her grandmother, Mary Ellen Chase became acquainted with other Blue Hill women not unlike the “unsinkable” Eliza Chase who lived “in a world . . . in which village opinion, even village respectability, held small importance” (Chase, *Fellowship* 21). For these broad-minded, sea-going women, such sermons as those preached by Jonathan Fisher and the men who later occupied his pulpit, although a dramatic and perhaps lively diversion from an otherwise mundane existence, probably brought no serious or heart-felt need for spiritual regeneration. These women suggested to the young Mary Ellen “certain attitudes of mind, certain ways of thought and behavior, completely at variance with those current among [Blue Hill] society as a whole” (Chase, *Fellowship* 20). Their God, if He existed at all, was not a consuming fire but a Being of love, understanding, and spiritual benevolence. Chase also writes that these women

were daring to a degree unknown to the women . . . who had spent their circumscribed lives at home. They were not hemmed in by village trifles or shocked by village misdemeanors. That hunger and thirst after righteousness, so grafted upon the New England mind by two centuries and more of precept and surviving today even among the emancipated in all manner of odd tenacities, seemed somehow not to have “taken” with them. They were to me alive and free, patient and wise, unflurried and fearless . . . These women whom I knew as a child had been too often beset by Fear itself to worry over mere fears. Dependent wholly upon wind and weather, they waited for so long that they had forgotten how to fret. Bewildered by strange

faiths in strange countries, they had long ago *ceased* to look upon the New England Congregational Church *as the one way* to God. They had played too many games with Death to cherish sure and certain notions as to the best means of dealing with life [emphasis added] (Chase, *Fellowship* 21-22).

Mary Ellen Chase's own dissatisfaction with the Puritanism found within the nineteenth-century Congregational Church had its vindication, no doubt, in her relationship with her grandmother. As she says, "Puritanism was not native" to her grandmother's disposition, but "it had been too well ingrafted in her early years for her ever to escape its clutches." The same may be said of Mary Ellen Chase as well. Although she made a profession of faith and joined the Blue Hill Congregational Church at the age of twenty, we know from *A Goodly Heritage* that Puritanism did not set well with her own temperament. She appreciated the aesthetics of religion, but she found New England Congregationalism too austere and too prohibitive in its doctrines. The list of "'thou shalt nots" was long and monotonous: thou shalt not drink; thou shalt not dance; thou shalt not smoke; thou shalt not live except as the church deems best. Chase had problems with these prohibitive injunctions because of the negativity implicit within them—the belief that humankind could not control or better itself without a fear of Divine retribution and a threat of eternal damnation. She also detested, as we know from her biography, the embarrassing spectacle made of the "salvation experience" required for entrance into the church.

Through her grandmother's early example, Chase came to view any life, full and well lived, as the religion *par excellence*. Perry Westbrook says of Chase's religious views:

The quality of one's living is, indeed, all important [to the author]. One may live on the material level and live a slave. Or one may live on the spiritual level where vicissitude does not penetrate. Once one is born again in spirit, to use Miss Chase's phrase, one begins to live religiously, whether in the cloisters, the schoolroom, the artist's studio, or the factory. It would be wrong to say that Miss Chase considers religion an aid to achieving the life of the spirit. Such life *is* religion; the two *are* one [emphasis added] (159).

Mary Ellen's phrase, "born again in the spirit," although an evangelical Christian term, does not involve the traditional Protestant view of a personal or direct spiritual encounter with the Deity. Chase's concept of salvation, unlike that of Jonathan Fisher, is not intended to "save" anyone from Hell. It is the religion of Humanism, the search for and recognition of eternal absolutes—Beauty, Nobleness, Courage, Love—which can make the present human condition's more hellish elements, change, poverty, sickness, death, not necessarily more understandable, but certainly more bearable. As Percy Westbrook aptly points out, Mary Ellen Chase's estimation of the human situation was that

man, of course, does not have complete mastery of his environment. He is subject to natural law; he grows old, becomes ill, dies. His plans are shattered, and his life is cut short by acts of nature; he is constantly vulnerable to accident. But the manner in which he meets the contingencies of human existence is subject to choice or will. He may resign himself to circumstances and submit to being a pawn, to being crushed. Or he may accept them as inevitable, yet not the final determining force in the quality of his life (Westbrook 159).

Naturally, Chase envisions a spiritual experience that still operates on a personal level, but it may be best defined as any enlightening experience or epiphany that reveals the eternal to the individual. As she says in her "Preface" to *The White Gate*, some

perceptions and experiences are, “in the long succession of dimly remembered days . . . like the flashing of fireflies in the darkness” (10). By choice and by free will, the individual, if he or she recognizes an epiphany and centers existence upon it, can choose to live a better, more productive, and spiritually fulfilled life. The acceptance of trials and tribulations as a portion of the human condition, without a descent into despair, hopelessness, and self-pity, marks one’s life as one possessing both quality and meaning.

Within her grandmother’s life, Chase could see that this idea of the epiphany had many times manifested itself. Eliza’s hardships on land and on sea, her love of nature, her love of world-wide travel, and her exposure to a life outside of her own cultural norm provided her epiphanies in great and measured abundance: “But with all delight in the experiences with which she had been favoured, she retained a breadth of vision which kept her horizons wide and clear.” Through each of her temporal experiences, Eliza Chase acquired the spiritual resources to transcend the mutability of the material world, finding within herself the personal strength, “that tireless energy, that resiliency from ill fortune, that extraordinary youthfulness,” to carry on through life’s ups and downs without a Puritan fear of transgressing “Divine Law” or inviting “Divine Justice.” The quality of her living was not diminished by the set-backs she so bravely faced; she “had played too many games with Death to cherish sure and certain notions as to the best means of dealing with Life.” Instead, she met material loss and emotional upheaval, her early poverty, the early deaths of her two little girls, and the death of her beloved husband, with much the same “ascendency over circumstance” that marked her survival at sea (Westbrook 159). She resigned herself to the life she chose and to the circumstances over which she had no control, all the while arising to meet each difficult

occasion as it presented itself. Eliza Chase's perspective, which was handed down to her granddaughter, was that "out of defeat comes victory; out of ugliness, beauty; out of discouragement, courage" if the human spirit truly learns to transcend the "vicissitude" of the "material world" (Westbrook 27, 159).

Chase's ideas on this subject are best played out in her works dealing with her most treasured subject, her grandmother's recollections of a visit made to Cadiz, Spain, in the early 1850s. Cadiz is mentioned in every work that deals with Eliza Chase, and in *A Goodly Heritage*, Chase points out that due to her grandmother's stories told in her own childhood it was "a far more familiar site than North Penobscot, the town adjoining Blue Hill" (177). We are also told that Eliza's "thoughts were quite as often in Cadiz as in Heaven." In her early essay entitled, "Not in Cadiz," Chase recalls the aging Eliza, by this time a widow who divides her year between the home of her son in Blue Hill and the home of her daughter in Bethel, sharing one of her many moments of enlightenment. This epiphany also possesses the potential to illuminate the "conscience-ridden little minds [of her grandchildren], so sadly best by Puritanism" (Chase, *Asse* 46). This story begins, like all Chase's stories involving her grandmother, on the barren, upland farm where Eliza was born and raised. Chase then discusses Eliza's first meeting with her husband, Melatiah, the dashing young officer just home in time to attend his own funeral. And, then Chase again explains the particulars surrounding their ill-fated honeymoon aboard *The Bride* in 1849. After Chase covers this introductory material which shows her grandmother's innate resiliency and determination to survive all that life throws her way, she shares her grandmother's story of Cadiz, which in the end, tells us much about grandmother, granddaughter, and the lives they chose to live religiously.

Eliza's story is an old one, known almost word for word by her grandchildren. Remembering her second visit to Cadiz, Eliza relates all that she encountered in that ancient city resembling "some great, crumpled white flower floating on the sea" (Chase, *Asse* 46). The Chase children become completely enthralled with "the lure of Cadiz [that] lay in its easy gayety," which is unlike anything they had ever witnessed in their tiny Maine village. Eliza's tale of red wine, of dancing women, and of strange, flirting troubadours gives her grandchildren an opportunity to ask her questions or make commentary heretofore withheld for fear of censure or correction. Despite her Puritan background, Eliza, on her twenty-third birthday, sets aside her early religious training, the "thou shalt nots" of orthodox Congregationalism, and lives for a moment as an uninhibited Spanish *senorita*. She realizes for the first time in her life that there are places on earth where Puritan mores and Puritan values are of no consequence and are actually held in very real disrepute. Eliza, luckily, is sojourning in just such a place. She tastes the red wine, dances with enthusiasm, and is serenaded by a Spanish musician playing a guitar; she revels in her hedonism and in her nearly guiltless abandon. As Chase relates each of these occurrences considered sinful by the puritanical standards of Blue Hill, the grandchildren marvel at their grandmother's deviation from the proscribed norms she presumably believes in and tries to reinforce. The conversation between the children and their grandmother, in part, runs:

Then [Grandmother's] startled ears caught the first thin notes of the guitar below her window; her incredulous eyes saw the red cloak, the plumed hat of a young man who had dined in this house of her [stay]; her abashed, reproving consciousness warned her to draw her curtains from so presumptuous an intruder.

“But you didn’t, Grandmother!” we cried, in the pause she always made to insure her reckless daring its full and requisite measure of admiration.

“Not at once,” she said, toying with her fan. “Here at home I must have, but not in Cadiz. Things are different there. I waited until he had sung the first song and thrown the rose from his hat far, far up to my balcony, and then—just for a moment, children—I leaned from the railing to thank him before I—withdrew . . .”

“But dancing is wrong, Grandmother. You tell us so yourself.”

“It is wrong, children. There is no question about that. It is *very* wrong here—but not in Cadiz.”

“And drinking wine. Remember the Golden Text you made us say, ‘Look thou not upon the wine when it is red.’”

At our words and those of the maker of Proverbs a puzzled zeal crept into her eyes, and, tightening the soft curves of her face, reigned at length triumphant.

“It is wrong, *very* wrong. Not for a moment, children, would I have you believe differently. But not in Cadiz. Things are different there.” (Chase, *Asse* 55-56).

The memory of her epiphany and the personal fulfillment she found in Cadiz are sweet to Eliza, bringing joy even as old age and senility made their insidious inroads upon her mind. Chase says, “Cadiz, symbol of her half guilty delight in the gay and the beautiful, which her rigorous childhood on a Maine upland farm denied her—Cadiz remained” (Chase, *Asse* 58). She further explains that

It was surely meet and right as the years, past and present, dimmed for Grandmother, as images and experiences became shadowy forms only now and again emerging from the quiet harmony of succeeding hours, that Cadiz alone should survive. There it stayed, far down in the bottom of her mind, as white and shining as it had ever been. Her

great love of books faded until it was lost in that host of ministering thoughts . . . Her delightful pride in prophesying the weather by swift and mysterious passages above her head of her left hand dipped in water was entirely forgotten . . . Even her stern and tenacious love of God was returned to Him to be softened and harmonized and made ready for her . . . She lay at last, after ninety years of rich and varied life, in her coffin . . . Cynthia [Mildred] and I, then in our twenties, stole in to see her, the usual stupid tears in my eyes, a shining in Cynthia's [Mildred]. About Grandmother's still lips a smile lingered, delicate, unmistakable. "She's not with God," whispered Cynthia [Mildred] to me. "She couldn't smile like that with Him! She gone back to Cadiz for a bit before she goes to Heaven!" (Chase, *Asse* 58-59).

Within her grandmother's early epiphany—that life as lived in Blue Hill, Maine was not the end-all, be-all of existence—Chase found her own share of enlightenment. Perry Westbrook writes that

The grandmother is willing to let the paradox [between two differing cultures] stand. There is a world of duty, the Puritan world. But there is also a world of beauty, Cadiz. Her own spirit demands, and has, both (132).

This freedom engendered by Eliza's thoughts and actions in a city halfway around the globe set Mary Ellen and her siblings free as well. She writes that her grandmother's three innocent words, "Not in Cadiz," set her conscience at liberty. "Not in Cadiz" becomes her mantra for life, the

magic phrase, breaking for delicious, venturesome moments the shackles from our imaginations, freeing us for the nonce from all the grievous weight of the armor of righteousness with which we were early charged to clothe our heads and feet and to gird about our loins! "Not in Cadiz!" In that white and shining city one's obvious

concern was first of all, not goodness but pleasure. There, with no need of apology or fear of puzzled reproof, one delighted in beauty; there, one's eager, hungry senses could be satisfied with the delicacies of sound, the pulsating exuberance of color; there one could safely and with complete freedom of conscience give oneself up to delightful sleepless hours of excited remembrance, which, our growing adolescence soon told us, must have followed close upon the retreating heels of the Spanish cavalier (Chase, *Asse* 54-55).

Eliza and Mary Ellen Chase, of course, both continued within their Christian tradition. Eliza retained her membership in the Blue Hill Congregational Church until her death in 1914. Mary Ellen, while a college student, explored Roman Catholicism, a religion considered taboo by good New England Protestants at the turn of the twentieth century. Striking a middle ground and retaining only the best of her early Puritanism while admiring the pageantry and mysticism of the Catholic faith, she eventually united with the Protestant Episcopal Church. But, church membership never meant much to either of these two women. They were independent thinkers able to leave "the creed and ritual thought [of organized religion] . . . for the broader thought" of living life as though it were a thing sacred unto itself (E. H. Chase 70). If life could be lived to its fullest extent, doctrine, dogma, precept, or the cultural mores created from the like could not hem in the mind or cramp the spirit. Just as Eliza initially tempered her Puritanism by exposure of other faiths and cultures, Mary Ellen tempered her life with the "amiable and welcome leaven" of her grandmother's worldly experiences and their forgoing, enlightening legacy.

If Eliza Chase's legacy to Mary Ellen was contained in the supposition that there was another life outside of Blue Hill and the Blue Hill Congregational Church, Caroline

(McFarland) Lord taught her how to create “order and harmony” within her own simple surroundings (95). We are first introduced to “Aunt Caroline” or “Aunt Cad” in “Relatives, Actual or Assumed,” a lengthy and entertaining chapter found within *A Goodly Heritage*. At the outset of this chapter, Chase explains,

Our family was unique among families in Blue Hill in that we had few near relatives. My mother had been an only child; of my father’s three sisters two had died young, one lived elsewhere. To be sure we were united to the population at large by several different strands; few, in fact, of the three hundred households which made the village and its environs were unconnected with one another through some line. But such intermarriage, though it may figure large in the cogitations of the sociologist, did not constitute relationship to us [as children]. In town we had no actual aunts and uncles whom we knew and no cousins near at hand (86).

The notion of relatives being either “actual” or “assumed” had its beginning, no doubt, with Chase’s mother, Mabel (Lord) Chase. She, as her daughter says, was an only child, and she “assumed” a stepbrother and stepsister when she was nearly thirteen years of age. With the absence of her father and her subsequent removal to her grandparents’ home, Mabel became acquainted with several distant relatives who became a part of her own personal support system. Caroline (McFarland) Lord, a woman related only by marriage to her second cousin, became an important and integral part of Mabel’s extended family. Caroline Lord was some twenty years older than Mabel Chase, and she, it seems, played the part of surrogate mother to the young girl after the early death of her own mother in 1875. This, in part at least, may explain Caroline’s close relationship to the young Mary Ellen.

Chase writes that Caroline Lord was “another relative, [even] more ‘assumed’ . . . for she possessed no ties of kindred even by marriage” (95). This assertion, despite her earlier explanation that “intermarriage . . . did not constitute relationship,” seems both erroneous and misleading. We must assume that Chase either did not know of her familiar connection to Caroline Lord or that she simply manipulated the facts to make Caroline seem even more “assumed” than she actually was, therefore, creating a better story. Given the genealogical and historical evidence, the latter assumption seems the most plausible. Caroline Lord and her husband, Roscoe Granville Lord, lived in a large house nearly next door to the Chase family. This house was designed and built by Roscoe’s father, Thomas M. Lord, the famous Blue Hill carpenter and architect who lived there until his death in 1880. Chase writes that Caroline “lived near us in a gracious house with beautiful carvings over its inside doors and stately pillars without” (95). The carvings of which she speaks were tiny rosettes, Thomas Lord’s signature feature incorporated in one way or another into each of the buildings he designed. Thomas Lord, we should remember from the genealogy section of this thesis, was the son of Benjamin Lord and the brother of Chase’s great-grandfather, Heard Lord. It would seem rather unlikely that Mary Ellen Chase, raised in a small Maine town where everyone was known by their family connections, could live in such close proximity to members of her mother’s extended family without being privy to the fact. Writing of Blue Hill just four years after *A Goodly Heritage* was published, Chase, in fact, writes that she grew up in “a great white house built a hundred years ago by a local architect and builder, Thomas Lord, *a relative of my mother’s*” [emphasis added] (“Noble History”).

Caroline McFarland was born and raised in Ellsworth, some fourteen miles from Blue Hill. She married Roscoe Lord in 1868 and took up residence in one-half of the old Lord manse at the corner of Union and High Streets in Blue Hill Village. The house was divided into two suites, which were occupied by two branches of the Lord family. Roscoe and Caroline, together with Roscoe's parents, Thomas and Matilda, occupied one suite of rooms, while Sarah Cole (Lord) Morse, Thomas and Matilda's daughter, and her husband, J. Henry Morse, occupied the other.

Caroline, unlike Eliza Chase and her sea-going friends, did not have opportunity to travel outside of Blue Hill. She and her husband were land-dwellers for the entirety of their lives and lived in a modest, circumscribed fashion. Roscoe worked as a paperhanger, and she was noted in Blue Hill as an excellent homemaker, neighbor, and at times, nurse. Raised in the Ellsworth Congregational Church, she married into a staunchly Baptist family—the very founders and builders of the Blue Hill Baptist Church. This fact apparently did not hinder her own religious convictions or influence the church to which she gave her time and personal support. She joined the Blue Hill Congregational Church soon after moving to that town, taught Sunday School for several years, and served as Superintendent of the Sunday School as well. She, in fact, taught Mary Ellen Chase and her oldest siblings in a Sunday School class designed for young adolescents. Of her relationship with Caroline Lord, Mary Ellen writes,

Another relative, more “assumed” even than Do (her mother's stepsister), for she possessed no ties of kindred even by marriage, was my “Aunt” Caroline. I use the singular pronoun advisedly, for I think she perhaps meant more to me in my formative years than she meant to my brothers and sisters . . . She was a short, small woman, almost tiny, with remarkable eyes. They were grey and

shone like those of a seer or a saint. She was herself both a seer and a saint; and her gifts, intangible, immaterial, unsubstantial, must not remain unchronicled. I knew her from my earliest childhood until her death in my twenty-third year. My relationship with her was from the first no ordinary one. Although she was the neighbor of neighbors, always present in times of need, I knew her, and like to remember her best, more in her spiritual capacity than in any other. I use the adjective here in its largest, most illimitable sense (95).

The mere fact that Mary Ellen would mention Caroline Lord as a spiritual adviser seems strange given the author's intense dislike of the Congregationalism which this woman undoubtedly represented. But, Caroline, like Eliza Chase, was no orthodox believer, and she did help the author revise and renovate many of her intellectual and theological concepts.

Caroline Lord believed in a certain order and harmony in the universe that displayed itself in her performance of her everyday duties. "Excellent housekeeper though she was," writes Chase, "the quick performance of her tasks was always more a means to an end than any end in itself" (95). To Caroline Lord, "the order and harmony of her house were necessary to the order and harmony of her mind and spirit" (95-96). However, she "was never conscious of fussiness or over-precision, only of a gracious order," and, unlike other Blue Hill matrons, Chase's mother included, she was certainly "no slave to her broom, her mixing-bowls, or to her oven" (96). The concepts of order and harmony she shared with the young Mary Ellen, talking with her as though she were an adult with grown-up feelings and mature ideas, were indeed "reflections in delightful conversation," conversation that over time helped to develop Chase's own sense of individuality (Westbrook 161). Chase explains, "[Aunt Caroline] talked to me almost as

though I were her own age, perhaps to give me . . . my confidence and self-respect”

(Chase, *White Gate* 69). She further explains,

As I grew older and felt within me those uneasy stirrings of earliest adolescence, I found conversation more simple and natural [in Aunt Caroline’s home] than elsewhere. I could be more unrestrained as to my vaulting, ever-changing ambitions. She was quite able to see me one day as the most capable of country doctors, driving on errands of mercy here and there about the countryside, and the next as a rising young author with the world at my feet. To her I could represent myself with impunity as a person with an important future, whereas at home my dreams were likely to be dimmed by the practical reminder that I was only one of seven and in all likelihood of no especial talent whatsoever. I read her the bad stories I had written and the worse verses. It was in her kitchen and sitting-room that I first felt emboldened to essay new words which I was shy of using in the company of my contemporaries or even too frequently at home. *Monotonous* was one of these; another was *weird*; a third, *romantic* (97).

Mary Ellen Chase, therefore, found in her relationship with Caroline Lord that order and harmony which comes from mutual respect, admiration, and friendship. Caroline allowed Mary Ellen to be herself with a sense of verbal license unknown in Judge Chase’s home, and Mary Ellen took part in adult conversations that ultimately shaped her person and her art without a fear of ridicule, rejection, or embarrassment. Perry Westbrook, best sums up this idea, saying that

ultimately, literary form and style have their origins deep within an author’s individuality. They are expressions of his heritage, his background, above all his habits of thought. In short, they are expressions of the quality of his life. Among the people of Maine, as they appear in books and in real life, are many who during their years on the land, on the coast, or on the sea have been moved to think long and deeply and who are willing to share their

reflections in delightful conversation with any one ready for an interchange of ideas. Throughout history, wisdom has had its origin in such interchanges, which are the flowering of a high civilization. Leisurely thoughtful talk, which is by no means dead in America, is a heritage from late Colonial times and the first fifty years of the Republic, when discussions of religion and politics flourished among all classes. Every man was to a certain extent his own philosopher and theologian and was less hesitant to express even unconventional views than he would be in our day when mass taboos are inculcated and perpetuated by mass media unheard of two generations ago. In Maine in Miss Chase's youth and, I believe, down to present day, the inroads against independence of thought have not been so great, perhaps because of the state's position off the most congested thoroughfares of the national life (161).

Mary Ellen's quality of life was enhanced and heightened by her friendship with Caroline Lord: "But there was spirit diffused from the sunlight on the yellow floor-boards of my Aunt Caroline's kitchen which was nowhere else and which lured me again and again to her side door under the syringa bushes; I know now that it was, in Pater's words, 'that deep, effusive unction of the House of Bethany'" (96-97). Chase found a refreshing balm, which soothed her teen-age yearning for a larger life and a larger understanding of life.

Through her relationship with Caroline Lord, Chase experienced another set of those Humanistic epiphanies which were to mark her life and art. As a deeply religious woman living within the cultural mores of the late-nineteenth century, Caroline Lord seems an unlikely candidate to have inspired a girl who would later go on to become a proto-feminist and a leading American writer, college professor, and lecturer of the mid-twentieth century. But, the evidence clearly suggests that she did. Her thoughts, although they seem conventional to us today, were truly a step ahead of her time. She,

like Chase's grandmother, viewed life differently than did the majority of her Blue Hill peers. Unlike Eliza Chase, who had traveled the world over, she developed her thoughts and ideas from an astute observation of life's incongruities found much closer to her own home. Within her church she was taught that women were to be subservient to men, but she knew women with talents far exceeding those of their male counterparts. From the Reverend Jonathan Fisher, we learn that

when three or four young men meet together for the purpose of amusement in an evening, I would recommend something in arithmetic to try their quickness in reckoning . . . Young women should always have some sort of work in their hands and the pleasure of conversation besides; and instead of scandal, which is too apt to be *their* failing, they may entertain themselves on the subject of family government in the home, or the management and education children, until that time when Providence shall please to communicate to them the mysteries of a family (Chase, *Fisher* 120).

This excerpt from one of Jonathan Fisher's many sermons was preached some ninety years before Mary Ellen Chase's birth, but in rural Maine, the roles of the sexes were clearly defined well into the mid-1900s. Men were the intellectuals, and women, even if they were intelligent, were relegated to the domestic domain. Caroline Lord, as is evident from Chase's depiction of her, was her "own philosopher and theologian," an independent person "ready for an interchange of ideas." Like Margaret Fuller, she believed that women were capable of being whatever they chose to be—wives, mothers, teachers, doctors, writers, and any other vocational possibility that the human mind could conceive. Her surrogate daughter, Mabel (Lord) Chase, after all, had been a successful

schoolteacher. And, at a time when women were expected to marry, keep to the home, and have children in abundance, Caroline Lord was willing to say with Fuller,

But if you ask me what offices [women] may fill; I reply—any. I do not care what case you put; let them be sea-captains, if you will. I do not doubt there are women well fitted for such an office, and, if so, I should be glad to see them in it (Fuller 329).

Caroline Lord, as a resident of a once active seaport, would have definitely known of Mary Brown Patten, the wife of Captain Joshua Patten, a Maine native, who, for fifty-two days, navigated her husband's ship while he lay dying of a brain-fever. Chase says, "We are used to the saying that 'the sea made men;' clearly, it could make women as well" (Chase, *Seven Seas* 96). This historical evidence would suggest that Caroline Lord, although a product of her time and religious environment, was indeed "quite able to see [Mary Ellen] as the most capable of country doctors . . . [or] as a rising young author with the world at [her] feet." Chase's own "vaulting, ever-changing ambitions" found encouragement from a woman who, in her own life, "quite clearly lived to make the ways and paths of . . . Uncle Roscoe, in so far as [she] could, ways of pleasantness and paths of peace, except that . . . [she], who was a deeply religious woman, lived also for God" (Chase, *White Gate* 74).

Caroline Lord's Christian faith also lightened the "vigorous Puritanism" to which Mary Ellen was subjected to on an almost daily basis. Caroline's belief system, although she was a member of the old-time Congregational Church, was based upon the simple biblical precept that God was love incarnate. And if God was love, then He too was worthy to be loved in return. By today's standards, there is nothing shocking or

unseemly in such a theological assertion, but in late nineteenth-century New England, most people, raised as they were under a fear of God's abiding wrath and fury, would have thought such religious views "well-nigh inconceivable" (100). "The fear of God," Chase stresses, "was our daily mental food" (99). Writing of the event which precipitated this stunning discovery, she says,

For years [Aunt Caroline] was my Sunday-school teacher. Her knowledge of the Bible exceeded the minister's and even my father's and far outdistanced that of my eclectic grandmother. Every Sunday morning after the church service we gathered in the white pews at just the right-hand center of the church . . . She transcended the heavy piety of the lessons we learned weekly from a dull pamphlet called *A Harvest for Young Christians*. Through her, Absalom became a pathetic rather than an arrogant young man and Saint Paul a celestial as well as a terrestrial adventurer . . . For years, too, she employed a custom which made its peculiar and lasting impression upon us. She used to ask the members of her class to come to see her on the last night of the year . . . The first of these indelible occasions took place when I was twelve years old in the year 1899. On that evening just before the clock said eight-thirty and our bed-times approached, she presented each one of us with a pencil and a slip of paper.

"Write," she commanded as she stood in our midst. "Write this date, 'December 31st, 1899. You will never in this way write it again. A century has passed, and a new one is beginning!"

I can still feel the catch in my throat as my fingers obeyed her. The solemnity of her words and the intensity with which she spoke them engendered far more than fear. There was in them the mystery of the passing of laden centuries, the awfulness of time in relation to Timelessness, the littleness and unimportance of us all—things gigantic and intangible enough, yet dimly perceived in that quiet room (98-99).

It was in this act of writing the last date of each year on a tiny piece of paper that Mary Ellen finally gained “the growing perception . . . and [the] more overwhelming revelation . . . that [her] Aunt Caroline loved God more than she feared Him” (99). The fact that Caroline Lord was the only person Chase “had ever known of whom this was true” is a truly sad commentary on the Christian faith of Blue Hill (99). “To love Him,” Chase says, “not for the purpose of extorting something from Him here and now, not for a reward after death, but actually because He was worthy to be loved” was considered anathema to people born and bred under the perpetual threat of eternal hellfire and damnation. Despite this widespread and detrimental belief, however, Chase still recognized that her “aunt loved [God] for Himself alone” (100).

In this epiphany, Mary Ellen Chase began the long “revulsion and renovation of [her] theological concepts” (100). She gradually realized that the Puritanism in which she was raised, aside from its cramped and confining theology, could never be a source of comfort or beauty to her; it instead engendered a form of terror which she calls, in the words of the English essayist, William Hazlitt, “the dreaded name of Demogorgon” (99). For Chase, a God who loved humankind and was worthy to be loved in return signified a kind of spiritual beauty that over time “was slowly borne in upon [her] in all its simple, beneficent Truth” (100). And, the beginnings of this conceptualization had its roots “in [her] early teens by [observing her] aunt’s consuming love of God” (100).

By calling Caroline Lord both “a seer and a saint” and remembering her “in her spiritual capacity,” Chase in a very real sense canonizes her aunt and links her forever to her own personal search for spiritual beauty—giving order and harmony to her human existence. This idea is best borne out in her essay entitled, “The Saints in Maine.”

In this particular essay, Chase, a confirmed Episcopalian remembering her Congregational childhood, tells of her own spiritual deprivation in Blue Hill at the hands of latter-day Puritans unwilling to recognize the saints as they are known within the Catholic or Anglican communions. In late nineteenth-century Maine, where Calvinistic Protestantism still flourished, the saints were considered “popish” personages and therefore, were rarely, if ever, mentioned. Writing in 1928, Chase says, “In Maine, twenty-five years ago, the saints endured a questionable, not to say sinister reputation, which even today in most portions of that fair state they have yet to live down,” and

only some half-dozen of them were, under scriptural sanction, accepted in our seacoast village and those by no appellation save their given names. The text for the Sunday sermon was taken from Matthew, never from the Gospel according to Saint Matthew; he who, standing in the porch of the high priest’s palace, thrice denied his Lord, whose very imperfections should make him the willing intercessor for us all, received from us no glorifying prefix to soften and illumine his remorseful condemnation; and that cultured Greek physician and poet, the author of the *Third Gospel* and the *Book of the Acts*, was, in matters of address at least, accorded no more respect than was tendered the village idiot, who bore his name (Chase, *Asse* 133).

Caroline Lord, though she is not mentioned by name, appears in this essay, explaining to the fourteen year old Mary Ellen as her Sunday School teacher, how exactly Congregationalists interpreted the phrase “the Communion of Saints” as found in “the Apostles’ Creed.” In Lord’s estimation, “the Communion of Saints” refers to either “the celestial conversations of those pious souls who were already among the blest” or “the conferences of the faithful who were still among” the living (134). No mention is ever made, except by the questioning and perplexed Mary Ellen, of “unknown yet open

avenues of grace between [mere mortals] and certain Shining Ones” (135). Nevertheless, Chase longs for saints in Maine, who like those of old, might strike beautiful “wells of water in a Puritan Valley of Baca” (138).

Mary Ellen Chase looks reflectively at “the paradox of spiritual richness and spiritual poverty in the New England of her girlhood” as she writes “The Saints in Maine” (Westbrook 130). She finds within the legends of Saint Francis, Saint Bride, Saint Teresa of Avila, and Saint Ursula people and places not unlike those she knew growing up on the coast of Maine. The saints lived in rural places and were concerned with country people. Saint Francis loved God’s creation—the birds, the animals, and the splendor of the earth’s beauty. Saint Bride concerned herself with the raising of sheep and livestock, recalling something of Maine’s bucolic and agricultural heritage. Saint Teresa’s personality was “like the New England character . . . with its strong practicality, its good sense, its natural shrewdness, its candor in the face of superiors” (143). Saint Ursula watched over and protected “schoolgirls and those who strive to teach them” (141). Drawing the parallel between Protestant New England and the Middle Ages, Chase writes,

Between the *Remarkable Providences* of Increase Mather and *The Little Flowers* of Saint Francis there is singularly little difference save in nomenclature; and doubtless God Who allowed Parson Avery to stand in deep waters as though his feet were upon dry ground was not far removed from the angel called Marvellous who once bore good Brother Bernard across a dark and terrible river . . . The plaintive sound of Saint Francis Xavier’s silver bell calling the children to their devotions along the white, sun-swept streets of Goa . . . the red roses of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary; the black and bitter cold which Saint Brendan endured for five years among the pillars of glittering ice. . . the generous and gracious influences of such as these, like

the “large and melodious thoughts” which descended upon Walt Whitman as he walked beneath the trees, might a quarter of a century ago have ministered unto Cynthia [Mildred] and me had the saints been accorded good standing along the coast of Maine (144-145).

But, within New England Puritanism, with its belief in the literal and infallible truth of the Holy Bible, no room could exist for the saints or their legends. Even though Increase Mather may have believed in providential miracles and wonders, his son, “old Cotton Mather” derisively calls the Roman Catholic Church and all of its teachings “the devil’s eldest son” in his *Wonders of the Invisible World* (139-140). Chase laments,

But in our childhood there were few shifting and colorful rays in the comfortless glare of Puritan truth and little warmth in the means of grace afforded us. One was good because it was right, dutiful, and altogether desirable to be good, not because it was beautiful and harmonious . . . The truth was the truth—to be determined after a simple and logical manner, then embraced, and ever afterward tenaciously held. Even children must not stray from it . . . Truth, justice, duty, righteousness—great and necessary names, indeed! But to many of us they are the “frail spells” of Shelley’s Hymn: whose uttered charm might not avail to sever / From all we hear and all we see / Doubt, chance, and mutability . . . And what is truth? we ask with Pilate, not jestingly, as Sir Francis Bacon would have it, but with the bewilderment which, for aught we know, was in his voice. What is truth and where is it? Has the philosopher or the theologian found it for any save himself? Is it to be apprehended only by hypothesis and syllogism? Rather is it not to be apprehended by the individual when he is once conscious of a quick and creative life springing up within him to become henceforth the deepest thing in his nature? If such is true, then truth must of necessity have various forms according to the character of this creative life. To some of us it is inevitable that the truth aesthetic will transcend the truth literal, that the truth poetic and artistic is more to be desired than the truth intrinsic (145-147).

Chase's version of the truth, as seen from this citation, was in opposition to what she was taught in her childhood. In her "creative life," the "truth poetic" and "the truth artistic" were more important than the "truth intrinsic." The saints, despite the theological reservations of her Puritan forbears and relatives, gave a beauty to life that she found sorely lacking within the Calvinistic theology of the Blue Hill Congregational Church. The saints "symbolized the virtues by the beauty of their lives," and the author, in her quest for spiritual beauty, "adopts [their] rituals and symbols as the handmaidens of [her own] theology" (Westbrook 131). For Mary Ellen Chase, this beauty becomes "the indispensable garment of truth," which clothes the eternal absolutes of God and His love and makes both recognizable to humankind (Westbrook 131). She writes, "For although our Puritan forbears were surely right in condemning [the] tales [of the saints] as false when viewed, as they viewed them, in the light of truth intrinsic, their grace and beauty are just as surely a part of that Truth which must be God" (148).

Mary Ellen Chase found within Maine a suitable place for "that Truth which must be God." She, in fact, says, "Gazing from a Maine hilltop across the waters of Penobscot Bay, we have seen a land and sea kind and clement enough for any saint" (139). But, given the spiritual deprivation of her early theology, she was forced to people her landscape with saints who were much more in touch with the overall New England spiritual condition. Caroline Lord was one such seer and saint. She, like Saint Ursula of Brittany, "went before [the young schoolgirl] perpetually, clearing [her] road from all impediments, throwing bridges over mountain torrents, and even at night pitching tents for [her intellectual and spiritual] shelter and refreshment" (142). Within Lord's home, unlike her own, Chase found an "order and harmony" that scattered a spiritual beauty

throughout her life, allowing her to glory in her own aspirations and individuality. She learned that people, like the saints before them, could and should love God because He deserved to be loved and revered; she also learned that one could attain to beauty even when performing the mundane, everyday tasks at hand—the cleaning, the cooking, and the sewing—without becoming a slave to the material world. The “spirit diffused from the sunlight on the yellow floor-boards” of Caroline Lord’s graciously ordered, harmonious, and tidy kitchen, which beckoned Chase time and time again to come in, is not unlike “that Beauty which holds within itself the Truth of Harmony and of Order,” which she writes of in “The Saints in Maine” (148). Both are important “gifts, intangible, immaterial, unsubstantial” which “must not remain unchronicled” for they signify humankind’s need of “that quick and creative life” that epitomizes the spiritual beauty “which must be God” (147-148). Caroline Lord, although an ordinary woman living in Blue Hill, Maine, gave Mary Ellen Chase the courage to say, “Give me Beauty in the inward soul, and may the outward and inward man be at one” (148).

The third person who exerted a tremendous influence on Mary Ellen Chase in her childhood was her mother’s stepsister, Elizabeth “Aunt Do” (Hibbard) Darling. “Aunt Do” (pronounced doe) presumably came to Blue Hill from Union, Maine, when her mother, Margaret (Fossett) Hibbard, married Chase’s maternal grandfather, John Newton Lord (W. W. Hinckley). Margaret (Fossett) Hibbard Lord met her second husband while visiting her paternal aunt, Elizabeth Fossett, the wife of Jarius Osgood, a life-long resident of Blue Hill (Candage 56). Through the marital union of their parents, Mabel Chase and Elizabeth Hibbard, who were approximately the same age, became very close, even though they did not grow up in the same home. While Mabel lived with her

grandparents, Elizabeth lived for a short time in Blue Hill, then in Ellsworth, and later in Waltham, Massachusetts with her mother, her stepfather and her brother, George Hibbard. On a summer trip to Blue Hill in her nineteenth year and through Mabel's village connections, she met William Henrey Darling, a middle-aged bachelor known for his intemperance. Do shocked the town when she announced her intentions to marry Darling, and she shocked it even more when she carried through on her intentions. Chase says, "Why she had done this was so unanswerable a question that it had ceased to be asked" (Chase, *White Gate* 60).

Henery Darling, a direct descendant of the early settlers of the town, lived in a large brick home overlooking Blue Hill Bay which was built by his father, Captain Anson Darling, shortly before he died in a shipwreck somewhere between Rotterdam, Holland, and Boston in 1844 (Candage 68). During Chase's childhood, "Uncle Hen," a staunch Democrat and known as the village eccentric, served as the village postmaster under the presidential administration of Grover Cleveland and worked at several odd jobs. For a short time, he worked as a storekeeper and later as a lobsterman. In the eyes of his largely Republican town, he possessed "no *gumption*" and "had no perceptible ambition, no profession or trade, and seemingly no aim in life but to enjoy himself and take no thought for the morrow" (Chase, *White Gate* 60).

Do, because of her husband's "shiftlessness," became, perhaps, the most liberated woman in the town of Blue Hill at that time. While other village women attended only to their household duties, she also helped to earn the money that kept the Darling household financially afloat. With the use of a hand-operated "knitting machine," Do

produced wool garments that she sold to a firm in Boston for much needed cash (Chase, *White Gate* 75). Do, as Mary Ellen recalls,

was an excellent housekeeper and cook, and she never for an instant neglected Uncle Henery's actual needs, but once those were attended to, and even while she was attending to them, she lived her own life. Perhaps this emancipation of Do's at a time when most wives and husbands were seemingly bound closely to one another, was an act of *adjustment*, or of *security*, or even a *necessity for survival*, terms then rarely, if ever used, and, had they been is use, quite meaningless to a child. I simply knew that Do was Do, that Uncle Henery was Uncle Henery, and that that was that (Chase, *White Gate* 74).

Although the relationship between Henery and Do did not seem strange to Mary Ellen as a child, her mention of it in adulthood would suggest that its unprecedented nature made an indelible impression upon her young mind. This fact can be easily understood. Her description of the Darling home runs exactly counter to what we know she witnessed in her own childhood home. Mabel Chase quite clearly lived to serve her husband, Judge Chase, and he would have certainly stamped out any "flighty notions" of female liberation or emancipation before they could have had a chance to usurp or displace his authority. While his daughters, like their mother before them, were allowed to teach school in their youth, they were expected to give up all outside employments when they finally married.

Do and Henery Darling were childless, and Do "knew no limits in her generosity" to the Chase children (90). Coming from a home where their every movement and every thought was both regimented and regulated by the strict Judge Chase, we can easily understand why Do became the favorite of the four oldest Chase children. In her very

lenient and permissive presence, Mary Ellen and her siblings felt free to do whatever they chose to do. Mary Ellen, recalling their momentous visits to Do's home, writes,

Her gifts to us were tangible and substantial like herself. Chief among them was her bi-yearly invitation to spend the day in her square red brick house beyond a cedar-lined driveway and within but a few feet of the water of the bay. Especially satisfying were these invitations because our parents were never included in them. We went by ourselves . . . at nine in the morning, and we came home at supper-time. This long, corporate absence from home under Do's very lenient supervision early gave rise not only to the tacit understanding that for two days in the three hundred and sixty-five we were free to do precisely as we pleased but also to the equally tacit agreement that we divulge at night no unnecessary detail . . . It was the one occasion of our youthful lives when no check was put upon us; and, secure in the knowledge of Do's ideals as a hostess, we knew that she could be no source of information (90-92).

For Mary Ellen Chase, these visits with Aunt Do afforded her three memorable amusements: the consumption of "a superabundant supply" of homemade potato chips, the perusal of the *Green Book*, a grisly "compendium of horrors," and the reading of Marie Corelli's *Thelma*, a romance novel that her father would have found "wanting in comparison with those [books she] read at home" (92, 94). While the Chase children "corporately" appreciated these days of pleasurable diversion at Aunt Do's house, her greatest gift to Mary Ellen, although pleasurable and amusing too, was a "substantial and tangible" favor not accorded the others.

In 1900, four months after she met the great Sarah Orne Jewett, Mary Ellen, suffering from an undisclosed respiratory ailment, perhaps the onset of the tuberculosis which plagued her in her mid-twenties, was sent to spend the summer with three of Do's

maternal aunts in an effort to make her well again. The semi-fictionalized events of that summer are outlined in Chase's 1928 essay, "Wormwood—For Thoughts" and are distinctly reminiscent of Jewett's *The Country of the Point Firs*.

In this essay, Mary Ellen Chase, at the advice of the family doctor in Blue Hill, is forced to treat her lingering and persistent cough away from the fogs and mists of the coast. She journeys by train to Piscataquis County, Maine, where the three great-aunts, Sarah Ann, Martha Ann, and Mary Ann "Fawcett" live together in "an inland and upland country . . . a hundred miles from the coast" (73). These three great-aunts, the older sisters of her step-grandmother, Margaret (Fossett) Hibbard Lord, were triplets and lived, in the essay at least, in an old farmhouse somewhere north and west of present-day Dover-Foxcroft. Mary Ellen writes of passing through the towns of "Dover and Foxcroft (at that time, separate municipal entities), Abbot Village, Guilford, Sangerville" on her way to the aunts' home (79). The location of the story, however, remains a mystery as the Fossett triplets actually lived in North Union, which is not in Piscataquis County, and is far too close to the ocean to be of help to a girl who was avoiding "the mists of Penobscot Bay" (78). Wallace William Hinckley, Chase's great-nephew, has in his possession a picture taken of these triplet aunts in Union, Maine at the turn of the last century. He suggests that the Fossett family may have originated in Piscataquis County, but by 1900, they were definitely residents of North Union (W. W. Hinckley, Letter).

In Chase's essay, the Fawcett sisters are seventy-eight years old, and they are completely devoted to one another. They resemble each other to a certain degree and, as Chase writes, "They still retained the fetish of dressing alike and wore simple gowns of

gray percale with white and hemstitched aprons. Of her first meeting with them, she writes,

As I saw them gathered in the wide doorway of the old house, I felt a sudden fear mounting for the moment almost in panic at the sudden apprehension of their collective years and of my own thin little life. But such fear was, naturally enough, put to rout by the necessity of greeting them and delivering the family messages and by the curiosity they involuntarily engendered. Identical though they may have been at eighteen, sixty years of diversity in environment, in occupation, and in thought had wrought many differences. They were the same height, though Sarah Ann seemed flattened into stoutness and Martha Ann attenuated into extreme thinness. They had the same white hair parted in the middle, though Sarah Ann's was streaked with yellow, whereas Martha Ann's hinted at curl papers, and Mary Ann's was pulled peremptorily into a very firm and somewhat arrogant knot at the back of her head. They had the same blue eyes, but in Sarah Ann's placidity triumphed, in Martha Ann's restlessness, in Mary Ann's prophetic insight. Sarah Ann's nose was strongly pragmatic; Martha Ann's delicate and a trifle disdainful; Mary Ann's eager like a pointer's. Aunt Sarah Ann inquired with real concern if I was not hungry; Aunt Martha Ann, in a tone redolent of literary circles, asked if I had read Dickens *in toto*; Aunt Mary Ann, whose quick nose smelled my asafoetida bag, threw queries to the winds and gave vent to astonishment, not unmixed with anger, that my cough had not been thoroughly dosed with anise and horehound mixed with just a trace of powdered flagroot. I answered Aunt Sarah Ann by eating a substantial supper of beans and brown bread, and Aunt Martha Ann by attempting to decide then and there my predilection for *Great Expectations* or *David Copperfield*. I did not answer my Aunt Mary Ann at all. Her assertion had been of too oracular a nature to make a reply at that moment seem either meet or right (80-82).

Mary Ellen is, of course, drawn irresistibly to Mary Ann Fawcett, the renowned and undisputed "herbalist of Piscataquis County" (73). She is an independent woman who

has never married and lives “in that singular mystery which ever belongs to the hierarchy of all those who heal” (90). Of the other two sisters, Chase tells us, “By quick degrees Aunt Sarah Ann and Aunt Martha Ann faded from the immediate daily round of my thoughts and experiences—the one with her quiet grave concern . . . the other with her frail, correct table manners . . . and her wistful anecdotes of Mr. Longfellow ‘in his younger days’” (83). Sarah Ann, we are told, has been married to her first cousin, John Fawcett, for nearly sixty years; Martha Ann, after a lengthy stay in Boston with her great-uncle, a Harvard professor, has decided to live out the remainder of her days in the peaceful surroundings of her birth. Aunt Mary Ann, though, becomes, during their summer together, Mary Ellen’s “great central lamp, overpowering the other lights [of Aunts Sarah Ann and Martha Ann] by the fierce irradiation of her prodigal self” (84).

The relationship that develops between the author and Aunt Mary Ann Fawcett in the course of this particular essay is not unlike the one shared between the narrator and Mrs. Almira Todd in Sarah Orne Jewett’s *The Country of the Pointed Firs*. Each of the healers depicted in these two works are, in many respects, larger than life, and the respective narrators who serve as their medicinal and spiritual novitiates follow reverentially after them. Perry Westbrook states that Chase, like Jewett before her, “clothes her commonplace subjects . . . in garments of Biblical and Classical allusions which give them meaning by uniting them to the universal human experience” (130). This is certainly true. Both Chase and Jewett “increase the stature of their people by relating them to an ancient [and noble] tradition” (Westbrook 26). Aunt Mary Ann, therefore, is called at the outset of the essay one of “the Three Graces” and one of the “the Three Fates” (77). Her endeavors “flourish like the bay trees of the Psalmist” (98).

She is like “the solitary wanderer among the wild places of Thessaly and Argolis in search of healing leaves and berries” (85). She favors the use of wormwood above all other herbs because it is “not only for the body . . . it’s for the mind as well” (97). Jewett’s Almira Todd is called “a huge sibyl,” an “oracle,” a “large figure of Victory,” and an “idyl of Theocritus” who arouses “a dim sense and remembrance of something in the forgotten past” (Jewett 14-16). Mrs. Todd also exists as an important link in the “golden chain of love and dependence” which is the hallmark of her feminine and Christian society (84). She favors the collection and use of pennyroyal which the narrator generally equates as a remedy for “great grief and silence” (49). Chase writes, “From that beneficent July morning [of my arrival] to the September day when, brown, coughless, and reluctant, I left the Piscataquis hills for the coast and school, I was my great-aunt’s disciple, she my Aesculapius” (92). Now, compare this to Jewett’s narrator when she says,

[Mrs. Todd] might have walked the primeval fields of Sicily; her strong gingham skirts might at that very moment bend the slender stalks of asphodel and be fragrant with trodden thyme, instead of the brown wind-brushed grass of New England . . . She was a great soul, was Mrs. Todd, and I her humble follower, as we went our way (137).

Jewett’s writings undoubtedly influenced Chase in her construction of “Wormwood—For Thoughts.” Both writers, as Perry Westbrook states,

discerned [a] persistent spirit of the past, an ageless dignity not unlike that of some ancient village of Greece or France or Italy . . . [Their] comparisons with the past are convincing, of course, only because the characters and scenes are convincingly portrayed. We can believe in the

connections with the past only because we are certain of the reality of present people and events (26).

Just as “a deeper intimacy” grows between Almira Todd and her narrator as they scour the countryside for herbs of every description, Aunt Mary Ann initiates Mary Ellen in the herbal rites “which made her a godsend to two generations of country doctors, a solace to a wide countryside, and an ultimate source of wisdom and of humor to her grandniece” (78). This “source of wisdom and of humor,” although a personal gift from great-aunt to niece, has the potential to influence all of humanity for the better because it is rooted in a past which is not completely forgotten.

The incidents recorded with “Wormwood—For Thoughts” center upon Mary Ellen Chase’s malady. She is sent to Piscataquis County for the express purpose of being cured at the very capable and able hands of Aunt Mary Ann Fawcett. There would seem to be nothing universal or ubiquitous in this particular case, but illness—whether it be physical, spiritual, or mental—is a very real part of the human experience. And, by placing her Aunt Mary Ann’s medical capabilities on equal footing with that of Aesculapius, the Roman god of medicine and healing, Chase attempts to raise the modern world to a nobility that she found sadly lacking in the twentieth century. As Virginia Smith Hall asserts, “Wormwood—For Thoughts” expresses Chase’s “antipathy toward the pettiness, the superficiality, of modern society” (101). Chase displays her displeasure with modern society at the conclusion of “Wormwood—For Thoughts.” She says that

All of this happened years ago; and one is painfully aware in these latter days of the name and penalty attached in social and intellectual circles to one who is willfully reminiscent. Yet in this era of tonsillectomies and appendectomies, abscessed teeth and complete nervous

breakdowns, when the most literary of magazines gives space to the insurmountable problem of paying the manifold costs of even legitimate illnesses and health insurance companies flourish . . . it is pleasing to recall that generous-footed Ophelia of Picataquis County, who once contend that wormwood was for thoughts (97-98).

Within the context of the “Biblical and Classical allusions” she makes, Chase, as Perry Westbrook points out, unites a personal, and therefore, modern, story to all those that are a part of “the deepest and best that has been thought and felt in all ages” (130-131).

Sarah Orne Jewett, in her “Preface” to the novel, *Deephaven*, expresses this same idea:

There will . . . exist that . . . class of country people who preserve the best traditions of culture and of manners, from some living inborn instinct toward what is simplest and best and purest, who know the best because they themselves are of kin to it . . . Human nature is the same the world over, provincial and rustic influences must ever produce much the same effects upon character, and town life will ever have in its gift the spirit of the present, while it may take again from the quiet hills and fields and the conservatism of country hearts a gift from the spirit of the past (Jewett 6-7).

Aunt Do Darling’s gift to the young Mary Ellen Chase was not a summer vacation outside of Blue Hill; nor was it her ultimate recovery from “the bronchial cough” with which she was suffering. Do’s gift to Chase was Aunt Mary Ann Fawcett, a “provincial and rustic” character who embodied and personified “the spirit of the past.”

The Humanism that Mary Ellen Chase espoused within her writings was largely dependent upon this “spirit of the past” embodied in the people, the “provincial and rustic influences,” she knew and loved. As this “imperishable value” of the past was passed down from one generation to another, a continuity of thought and of practice was created

that preserved that past in many of “the best traditions of culture and manners.” For her, though, this continuity was best preserved in literature. In rural New England, particularly that part of rural New England that included coastal Maine, Chase found a nobleness and spiritual beauty that she could trace back through her heritage—the “simplest and best and purest” parts of the true Yankee character. She found ways in which the past could present positive solutions and create positive changes within her own modern society. She found in the past those moments of spiritual or moral transcendence, her spiritual epiphanies, which both inspired and challenged her to present her heritage in “ideas and ideals, which are in themselves imperishable, even though in the course of time they may assume another form” (“Noble History”).

As we now turn our attention to Chase’s Maine novels, this spirit of the past, with all its gifts and blessings, will become clearly obvious.

The Maine Novels

Writing of her lengthy literary career in the March, 1962 edition of the *Colby Library Quarterly*, Mary Ellen Chase emphatically states, “The three novels which are based securely upon Maine history and Maine life, both past and present, are *Mary Peters*, *Silas Crockett*, and *The Edge of Darkness*” (“Novels” 14). These novels represent the culmination of Chase’s literary prowess and her reverence for the “spirit of [Maine’s] past,” a past which she considered, with its people, traditions, and events, a goodly and noble heritage. For reasons of their literary indebtedness and chronological position within the overall Chase canon, only *Mary Peters* and *Silas Crockett* will be included in

this particular study. These two novels deal exclusively with Chase's own immediate background, and as she writes,

Among all my novels I am fearful of those about Maine, largely, I suppose, because I am conscious of failure not only in myself and in whatever small power I may possess over words and their elusive ways, but also toward the rich heritage which I have been given, either by happy chance or by the Grace of God. For to have sprung from Maine seafaring people; to have spent my childhood and many of my later years on a coastline unsurpassed in loveliness; to have inherited a wealth of thrilling history and tradition; to have been born at a time when great ships, built by Maine people in a hundred seacoast villages, had been for nearly a century making Searsport and Rockland, Belfast and Thomaston, Wiscasset and Calais better known in Canton, Singapore, and Sydney than even New York and London were known; to have been brought up with men, and with women, too, who knew the Seven Seas too well to be bounded in their thoughts by narrow confines of their own native parishes; --such an inheritance of imperishable values imposes a debt which cannot possibly either be underestimated or ever fully discharged ("Novels" 14-15).

Chase, although modest and reserved about her skills as a novelist, earned a national reputation with her regional works dealing with Maine and Maine life. Beginning with *A Goodly Heritage* in 1932, she concentrated her literary efforts for the better part of the 1930s on her native state and the seafaring people she knew during her childhood. *Mary Peters*, published in 1934, is, in large part, a fictionalized account of the life and writings of her paternal aunt, Mary Dyer (Chase) Herrick. In this novel, Chase looks at the memories of Mary Peters' childhood and explores how they define what is both beautiful and virtuous in her adult life. *Silas Crockett*, which was published nearly two years after *Mary Peters*, explores four generations of a sea-faring family living and working on the

Maine coast between 1830 and 1933. This novel is considered by many to be Chase's greatest work of fiction, and in it, through the various members and recollections of the Crockett family, she delineates the rise and fall of Maine's maritime tradition.

Appraising her Maine novels, Chase says,

I have written novels about Maine, although I would be most hesitant to say that they possess much merit. All that I can honestly claim is that they are the best that I can do. And since the editor of this *Colby Library Quarterly* has asked me to write about them, their genesis, their characters, their purpose, I am very glad to do so *since of all my books they mean the most to me* [emphasis added]. More than *A Goodly Heritage*, which, seemingly an autobiography, is more truly an account of the traditions behind the formation of New England life and thought; more than my books about the literature of the Bible, which I have taught for many years at Smith College; more even than *The White Gate*, which I wrote purely for fun and got that fun, "pressed down and running over" (17).

That the Maine novels meant more to Mary Ellen Chase than anything else she had ever written says much of a woman who once claimed, "There is only one book I have written which is worth anything at all, and that is *A Goodly Heritage*" (Hillman 2). While *A Goodly Heritage* is "an account of the traditions behind the formation of New England life and thought," the Maine novels apply the personal and historical information found in this and her other autobiographical writings to a fictional genre, creating fine literature that easily doubles as substantial and important social history. This idea is best borne out in another statement made by Chase in 1939. Writing of her grandmother, Eliza Chase, and the other sea-going women she knew, Chase says in *A Goodly Fellowship*, "As I grew older and dreamed of writing books, I decided that sometime I would write of them and of their finer larger ways of life and thought. This I have tried to do in *Mary Peters*

and *Silas Crockett* in grateful acknowledgment of what they taught me long ago in their homes that faced the sea” (23). She paid her debt to such people by creating art that would immortalize their stories, their way of life, and their collective past while recording her “confidence in the moral and spiritual resources of the American character” (Westbrook 25).

Chase’s creation of literature that can also stand as social history is very much a part of her Humanistic inclination—her way of incorporating the past into the present and extending its positive influences into the future. Her Humanism, the idea that “mind and spirit supersede matter, render man unique on earth, and make him the ultimate master of his destiny,” is thematically important in each of these Maine novels (Westbrook 158). It is through thinking and feeling that Chase’s characters find ways to lead productive lives while the uncontrollable forces of nature, change and progress, and illness and death threaten their peace and tranquillity of mind. Each generation has something positive to offer those who will follow, and as she says in *A Goodly Heritage*, “out of simple beginnings, by toil, by adaptation to circumstances, and by seizure of occasions, one generation can give rise to a better” (16). Just as the past generations offered Chase spiritual and mental fodder in her own life, her novels seek to pass on the “spirit of the past” to future generations, preparing them for the “meeting and understanding [of all] crises, great and small,” which they will experience within their personal lives or within modern society (Duckett 3). But, in order for this spirit to achieve any good at all, each generation must work toward a better existence, knowing that the past can only dispense its many important gifts when, and if, humankind is willing to closely examine them, accept them, and learn from them. As Chase writes at the conclusion of *A Goodly*

Heritage, “But the wise . . . will seize upon whatsoever things are here and now of good report because of their larger honesty and justice, cultivating meanwhile from the gifts tendered [from the past] . . . a merry relinquishment as well as a larger understanding” (298). Chase certainly did not advocate the incorporation of the past into the present and the carrying of that past into future simply because she thought that the past was better or more moral. Humanity, if it was to achieve its full potential, had to know what hazards and what blessings had befallen civilization in the past, keeping alive the “traditions of culture and manners” for posterity.

For Mary Ellen Chase, the “traditions of culture and manners” were best preserved within the collective memories of humanity. Her works, both autobiographical and fictional, rely upon recollection and reflection as the all-important vehicles that move humankind toward greater spiritual growth and mental progress. She truly believed that the past was best passed on to future generations in the form of memories—making the reader feel personally attached to the causes and the effects of history. In her autobiographies, she managed to retrospectively re-create her nineteenth-century childhood in an attempt to pass along the information about her family and her community that she felt would be pertinent to the twentieth-century lives of her audience. In her Maine novels, Chase created characters who are thematic representatives of what she believed should be best remembered from the seafaring past of both Maine and New England, hoping that this too would influence modern society for the better. John Iorio, writing in 1962 about Chase’s regionalist tendencies, says that she carries this “chronicle forward . . . to see in the decline of a region not only a meaningful relationship to twentieth century realities, but the source of a people’s strength and a continuing spiritual

heritage” (21). *Mary Peters* is a novel concerned with personal recollection—ideas and occasions that can enlighten the individual mind and soul. *Silas Crockett* deals with the memories—or the traditions—of a sea-going family over a restless and turbulent century—eventually giving a future generation both perspective and hope during the darkest days of the Great Depression. Within each of these novels, the memories of a past—larger in scope than the problems of the immediate present and providing an “enduring value” to life in a future which may be indistinct and scary—help Chase’s characters live lives that are both noble and dignified. Just as these respective characters come to realize that the past is “a fine thing to move on from,” Chase’s Maine novels are intended to inspire her readers to lead better, more productive lives because they, as Americans, regardless of their race, region, or religious background, share a part of this “splendid [and positive] heritage” (“Noble History”).

Mary Peters is a novel about the memories of Maine seafaring women. In this work, Chase discusses the life these women endured while sailing around the world with their husbands and fathers during the declining days of Maine’s maritime tradition. She also writes of their life on land and how each experience defines and explains the other. Although Chase believed that women usually hated and feared the seafaring life, those who followed their male relatives to sea inherited “a world of far-flung boundaries, a world of reminiscence, of wider thinking, of a kind of humorous tranquillity, in which village opinion, even village respectability, held small importance” (Chase, *Fellowship* 21). She, remembering the influence of her grandmother and her grandmother’s friends, began writing *Mary Peters*, as Elienne Squire contends, “to perpetuate the spirit of a splendid past and extol the virtues which endured” into modern times (94). Chase states

that this particular novel was born in her own mind “at least twenty-five years before Mary, her mother, Sarah Peters, her father, who was captain of the *Elizabeth*, the officers and sailors of the ship, and the village of Petersport had any shape at all beyond dim dreams and visions” (“Novels” 16). These dim dreams and visions—these memories of the past—had their beginnings, of course, in her grandmother’s stories, stories which her aunt, Mary Dyer (Chase) Herrick began recording and printing as early as 1898.

Mary Ellen Chase states that the character of “Mary Peters is an idea more than she is a person . . . she is modelled upon no one, nor is any other character in her book” (“Novels” 18). While we may take this statement at face value, Chase does not seem to be entirely honest in her assertion because she then goes on to say Mary’s creation is a composite of “ bits of conversation, tricks of speech, the odd use of hands, a pair of eyes, episodes and events, countless mannerisms” (18). A composite, even though a borrowing from several different sources, *is*, nevertheless, grounded in real people and in the real world. Chase readily acknowledges that she borrowed Mary Peters’ name from one of her great-great-grandmothers, most probably Mary “Molly” (Peters) Kimball, mother of Polly Kimball who married James Chase and later gave birth to Melatiah Kimball Chase, the author’s grandfather (“Novels” 17). Given further historical and genealogical evidence, however, it seems that Chase drew more heavily upon the lives of actual persons in her creation of the novel than she was willing to admit. The shipwreck and subsequent drowning of Captain Peters and his first mate, Mr. Gardiner, in the harbor of San Francisco mirrors the death of George Washington Chase, the younger brother of Melatiah Chase, off the coast of California in January 1860. The marriage of Mary Peters to Jim Pendleton, it seems, has its roots in the actual world as well. This unlikely

relationship between an intelligent, hardworking woman and a man known for his strange, intemperate ways runs closely parallel to the marriage of Elizabeth Hibbard, Chase's step-aunt, and her husband, William Henery Darling. Mary Peters, like "Aunt Do," is forced to work outside the domestic sphere in order to keep her household running financially while her husband floats through life without a care or a concern for the morrow. Chase, however, draws most heavily upon the biography and characteristics of her aunt, Mary Dyer (Chase) Herrick, in her construction of *Mary Peters*. Herrick, by her own admission, was one of those old New England souls who saw "the simplicity of [nineteenth-century] living give way to bewildering complexity [of the twentieth century, and] that for the worse" (Herrick "Golden Age"). Chase reverentially created Mary Peters after the fashion of a woman she deeply respected and once reportedly referred to as "the most important literary and historic influence within the Melatiah and Eliza Chase family" (W. W. Hinckley).

Mary Dyer Chase was born in Blue Hill on November 15, 1857, some four years before her parents, Captain Melatiah Kimball Chase and Eliza Ann (Wescott) Chase, decided to leave the sea to pursue land-based business enterprises. She stood witness to much of the history Chase incorporates into *Mary Peters*. Unlike Mary Peters, Herrick was born on land, but her first four years were spent intermittently at sea and at the Chase home in Blue Hill. She retained a life-long interest in the seafaring life, as her infrequent columns in the *Bethel* [Maine] *News* certainly testify. In the first of a series of columns entitled, "Reminiscences," Herrick says, "The terrible tales of the sea that have so wrung our hearts during this week have brought vividly to my recollection the stories of wreck and disaster upon which my childish brain was nourished" (Herrick). These "terrible

tales” include “the never fully explained loss of the steamer *Portland* in a November gale” in 1898 (W. P. Hinckely, “Notes”). She goes on to say,

But, perhaps the thing which left the most indelible impression upon my mind, were the tales told by the fireside on wintry evening by visiting sea captains, and to which, sitting entranced on my little stool, I was a breathless listener. Sea captains, as is well known, were eminently social beings, and upon land, always gentlemen of leisure. No pleasure was so congenial to them as that of retailing to a sympathetic audience the experiences of past voyages. Or, perhaps it would be a retired mariner with his wife, on one of the two or three days’ friendly visits, which it was one of the customs of the guild to make and receive “about once in so often,” as the immortal Mrs. Ruggles would say, who would beguile the frankly-confessed tedious existence on dry land, by narrating former adventures. Among the many tales I heard, I naturally thought then, and perhaps pardonably may think now, among the most thrilling were those which embodied the experiences of my own father and mother (Herrick).

Herrick outlines in her article certain stories that are very much like those found in Chase’s autobiographies and her Maine novels. Of course, it is obvious that the writings of both Herrick and Mary Ellen Chase had their origins in the same person, Eliza (Wescott) Chase. Nonetheless, the novel, *Mary Peters*, does, in many ways, run parallel to the life and personal recollections of Mary Dyer (Chase) Herrick. In her writings, Herrick remembers her father’s shipwrecks, her mother’s early love of Cadiz, the importance of books and study while at sea, and the advent of steam-powered ships which eventually brought the days of sail to an end. Chase incorporates all of these materials, in one form or another, into her construction of *Mary Peters*. Mary Peters’ father is killed in a shipwreck. She too falls in love with Cadiz. She is educated under the tutelage of her mother and Mr. Gardiner while the *Elizabeth* makes its way from port

to port. And, the Peters family cleaves to wind-driven ships long after it has become clearly evident that steam-power will reign supreme upon the seven seas. Mary Herrick and the fictional Mary Peters are also approximately the same age, and they witness the decline of shipping and the rise of the tourist industry along the Maine coast from much the same vantage point. While Herrick initially enjoyed the rusticators and their leisurely way of life, Mary Peters is concerned over the changes these people make upon the Maine coast and upon the Maine character. She soon realizes, though, that they, despite their wealth, their college educations, and their social prestige, do not possess an intimate knowledge of the world like that of people drawn from seafaring stock—a point of view that Mary Herrick eventually espoused before her death in 1936. Mary Peters, like Herrick, proves to be an intelligent young woman who attends the local academy, goes on to college, teaches school for a short time, and marries somewhat later in life. And, it is also clear from Herrick's writings that her childhood provided her with memories that helped her to live a productive and full life in the rushing, face-paced modern world. Comparing nineteenth century sensibilities to the moral wantonness and lack of quiet time found during the roaring 1920s, she speaks with some of her niece's Yankee humor and wit:

They [the previous generations] sat down, let me say in passing, calmly, with the certainty of staying there. People were not whisked to the ends of the earth and back again of an afternoon in those days. Then a drive to a neighboring town was an event, attended with a good deal of pleasurable excitement. Now if you happen to sit down yourself, all the rest of the world is rushing like mad before your window. I have lived through so many innovations that I confidently expect to see, before I die, my beefsteak dropped down upon the back doorstep from an aeroplane.

What wonder that folks nowadays have restless minds
(Herrick, "Golden Age").

For Mary Ellen Chase, those "folks"—her aunt, her grandmother, and herself—nourished on the past and able to draw on it in reflective ways were able to calm their "restless minds." They developed a resiliency, which enabled them to survive whatever life and circumstance could possibly throw their way. This, in an essence, is the role that Mary Peters' memories play in Chase's construction of the novel that bears her name.

When *Mary Peters* appeared in 1934, the critics offered Mary Ellen Chase unequalled praise for her artistic efforts. Robert Coffin, always a staunch Chase supporter, calls the novel "a document of the first water" and "an elegy" to a disappearing way of life (3). He also goes on to say that "those [people] who still love life for its nobleness and the designs of its rhythms will thank Mary Ellen Chase from the bottom of their hearts . . . her book is magnificent" (3). Lewis Gannett, writing for the *New York Herald Tribune*, states that *Mary Peters* is "a scrupulously accurate and passionately loyal picture of an old America lingering into the present" (15). Fanny Butcher, reviewing the novel for *Catholic World*, says that *Mary Peters* has "many magnificent qualities, so much of reserve and idealism, of the translation of visual beauty, and the structure of human character" (503). The *Christian Century* calls it "more than a beautifully-written novel . . . [it is] a social document of lasting value" (378). These reviews appropriately summarize Chase's Humanistic intent in *Mary Peters*, but they offer only auxiliary explanations for her composition of the novel. While she truly wanted to write a novel that made the significance of Maine's maritime heritage palpable to her modern audience, she also wished to discuss how Maine people, through the

fluctuating economic and social trends of their times, had found emotional and spiritual ways to survive in a sometimes bleak and austere environment. Chase states that the sole idealistic purpose of the novel is to show “how a childhood spent largely at sea might help to form a mind and imagination invulnerable against time, chance, and tragedy” (“Novels” 18).

Mary Peters is definitely a character who must inure herself to these ravages of “time, chance, and tragedy.” She is nine years old when the novel begins, and at its conclusion, she is just over sixty years of age. During the fifty-year period depicted in the novel, Mary, born aboard the *Nautilus* in Singapore Harbor, goes from living on a ship with her relatively well-to-do parents and brother to being a mature, penniless woman facing old age virtually alone. She, however, is an undisputed New England survivor, and her life makes a complete cyclical revolution from childhood to old age in the course of the novel.

Mary Peters is divided into four sections—“The Sea,” “The Village,” “The Land,” and ending where it begins, with “The Sea.” These four sections represent the four overlapping, and yet distinct, phases of Mary’s life. In the first section, we are introduced to her as a child living aboard the family’s ship, the *Elizabeth*. She lives there until she is fourteen and ready to enter the Academy at Petersport, her hometown, a Maine village resembling in many particulars Chase’s beloved Blue Hill. Just as she and her mother, Sarah Peters, disembark in San Francisco for their long land journey back to Maine, her father and her best friend, Mr. Gardiner, the ship’s first mate, are killed in a freak storm that slams into the California coastline. With her return to Petersport, “The Village” section of her life begins. She enters the Academy where she excels in her

studies—especially Latin and Greek. She meets Hester Wood, a girl her own age, and the two become best friends. Through Mary, Hester meets Jim Pendleton, a young man Mary has known for several years, as his father was also a Petersport native and a sea captain. Jim is the novel's "n'er do well," a young man who is "unstable and lacking all integrity and dignity" (Iorio 25). He is the product of a mixed marriage—his father, a Maine native and his mother, a French singer—which makes him an alien and an outcast among the native stock of the ever-conservative and ever-critical Petersport. Jim is handicapped both physically and emotionally—he has a lame leg, and because of his overly permissive upbringing cannot commit to anything or anyone. While Mary befriends Jim, Hester becomes pregnant with his child and dies in premature childbirth. Jim abruptly leaves Petersport for New York City. Mary, who has just graduated from high school, goes on to the normal school at Castine. During the village portion of her life, Mary Peters witnesses the gradual decline of the shipping industry, the advent of steam-driven ships, and the rise of the tourist industry. The third section of the novel, "The Land," deals with Mary's life after her graduation from the Castine Normal School. She teaches a small district school near the upland farm that her older brother, John Peters, has just bought. She and her mother move into his home to help him to run the farm and to keep him company. John eventually marries Mary's high school classmate, Ellen Kimball, a beautiful, but narrow-minded, girl with an abrasive and irksome personality. John and Ellen have one child, a son, who dies soon after his birth. In the meantime, Mary goes to work as preceptor of the Petersport Academy, and her mother suffers a stroke, which leaves her an invalid for the remainder of her life. Mary continues to teach, assumes all the housework, and cares for her failing mother. John is killed in a

tragic accident; Sarah Peters dies after eight years of incapacitation, and Mary is then free to marry the unpredictable Jim Pendleton who is just back from the city and still does not want to work. Mary, who has given up her job at the Academy to marry, begins tutoring the children of the summer people to support the household. She and Jim become so destitute that she begins selling off the Peters family heirlooms, the furniture, linen, and china brought back from the “far voyages” of her parents and ancestors, to help make ends meet. Jim eventually is killed in an automobile accident while carrying on an illicit affair with Mary’s widowed sister-in-law, Ellen. Ellen is badly injured in this accident as well and will be paralyzed for the remainder of her life. The remaining section of the book is dedicated once again to “The Sea.” Mary, who must care for Ellen, sells the old Peters home in the village and moves with Ellen to John’s abandoned farmhouse. The two make their scanty living hooking rugs, which they sell to the wealthy tourists and summer people. At the conclusion, Mary returns spiritually to the sea through her rug hooking and when she meets the second Mr. Gardiner, a nephew of her childhood friend and a man who also appreciates his own seafaring heritage. This meeting brings the novel to its climax and completes the full cycle of Mary’s incredible life.

Throughout the novel, Mary Peters does not become bitter about the problems and setbacks she faces. Memories, good memories, sustain her through everything she must endure. Chase’s epigram to *Mary Peters*, taken from *The Brothers Karamazov*, appropriately sets the theme of the novel which is based upon the supposition that personal memories and the redeeming qualities that they possess within themselves can save a human life from the sea of despair and self-pity. Good memories are, in Chase’s Humanistic ideal, the product of the reflective “mind and imagination” contemplating the

past and making itself “invulnerable . . . against [the inroads of] time, chance, and tragedy.” The epigram reads:

You must know that there is nothing higher and stronger and more wholesome and good for life than some good memory, especially a memory of childhood. People talk to you a great deal about your education, but some good, sacred memory, preserved from childhood, is perhaps the best education. If a man carries many such memories with him into life, he is safe to the end of his days, and if one has only one good memory left in one’s heart, even that may some time be the means of saving us (iv).

Just as Eliza Chase and Mary Dyer (Chase) Herrick could recall their memories of the sea and life upon it, and could put their lives in the modern world into a proper perspective, Mary Peters holds at the core of her own being memories which make her sometimes difficult life not only bearable but beautiful. Her “education” about memories, and Chase’s opinion of the subject, is best summarized in a conversation between Mr. Gardiner and Mary as they watch a distant ship disappear over the horizon from the deck of the *Elizabeth* during a spectacular sunset. Mr. Gardiner, speaking in a philosophical tone, tells Mary,

“That’s it Mary . . . That’s what this life is that you and I know. There couldn’t be a better symbol of it. It’s hull down with everything that tough and hard about it. It’s only the sails and the glow on them that we’ll remember. That doesn’t go out. You keep it in your mind even after the sea has taken it. That’s what brought me back to ships, and that’s what you’ll remember all your life” (70).

Throughout her life, Mary’s beautiful memories—“the sails and the glow on them”—transform the ugliness and unpleasantness of her life—“the hull down with everything

that's tough and hard"—into an afterglow of serenity, harmony, and tranquillity. Her "restless mind" finds a peaceful, ordered existence and a harmony within her own sea-going past as the monstrous tides of time and change carry everything else away. Virginia Smith Hall reiterates this idea when she says that "memories are precious to Mary Peters . . . when she is left alone to live her life" (101). These memories, as Virginia Barstow also asserts, are an "inheritance that safeguards her against the loneliness of her life as a New England schoolteacher, the tragedy of being the survivor of her entire family, the death of Mr. Gardiner, and later of Jim Pendleton" (58). Mary Peters saves herself many times from despair and anguish by recalling the sights and sounds of her childhood travels around the world. "Memory," as Hall further writes, "helps one to live right, helps one to accept things as they come" and Mary Peters learns this lesson early (101). She eventually realizes that life "is a kind of waiting upon the graciousness and the bounty of things which had been, in order that the things to come might find one free and unafraid" (377).

Mary Peters' discovery of "the graciousness and the bounty" of the past claims the same place—both physical and spiritual—that Mary Ellen Chase "had early taken" for her own while listening to her grandmother's tales of foreign travel (Chase, *Asse* 44). Evelyn Caldwell Dodge writes that "this image, that of Mary's vision of the Spanish port Cadiz, is not only central to this novel, but was adapted from an image which had belonged to Mary Ellen Chase personally from the days of her childhood" (111). Mary Peters, like the author and her family members, "establishes Cadiz both as a symbol and as an experience to be drawn on for the rest of [her] life" (Dodge 112).

When we are first introduced to her, Mary Peters and her brother are walking along the deck of their father's ship while it stands at anchor in the wide harbor of Cadiz. Chase writes, "Mary Peters first saw Cadiz in 1880. She was nine years old then" (3). Chase's choice of words here is, indeed, interesting and significant. She implies by her use of the phrase "first saw Cadiz" that Mary Peters will once again view "the dazzling whiteness of this strange city" (3). She does not. While Mary Peters "first saw Cadiz" with her eyes, she will see it for the remainder of her life only through the eye of her memory. She appropriates Cadiz as a symbol of all that is good and eternal in the temporal and changing world, finding within "its high encircling wall which kept the sea out, its domes and spires, turrets and pinnacles and minarets reaching upward, the confusion of its many homes, even the sunswept lines which marked its narrow streets—all white beneath a sky of Spanish blue" a spiritual tranquillity and a peace of mind that transforms her hard, and often somber, life into one of beauty and light (3). In her memory of Cadiz, she finds a mental retreat that keeps the tides of life from inundating the spirit, allowing her soul, like the domes, spires, turrets, and pinnacles of the old city, to reach upward away from the confusion and uncertainty that often mars her very human existence.

Cadiz, the Cadiz of Eliza Chase, Mary Herrick, and the author, therefore, becomes Mary Peters' Cadiz—the beautiful unifying symbol of her life and of the novel. It is Mary Peters' "snow-white city . . . rising from the blue water, gleaming in the Spanish sun, like some New Jerusalem awaiting tired, seaworn exiles from home" ("Novels" 17). Chase, making connections between the creation of Mary Peters' character and her own family traditions and stories, says,

My grandmother always hated and feared the sea, and with ample cause. Yet she understood what it had to give to women of her generation who loved their shipmaster husbands too much to remain at home while they sailed upon it. And this perception she somehow managed to convey to me as a child—this understanding of its gifts as well as of its terrors, this sense of a great and various world beyond our own small harbor and our Maine hills. Cadiz thus became a symbol to me, too, remaining always in my mind, together with my grandmother's memories of long hours on a quarterdeck while the benign tradewinds blew; of gay, fearless days in one port of another; of this sailor and that; of strange harbors and tongues; of gallantry and cold and danger; and, above everything else, of a life bigger and wider and more full of meaning than that on my inconsequential childhood ("Novels" 17).

Just as Eliza Chase and her descendants saw the permissive and inviting Cadiz standing "like some great, crumpled white flower floating on the sea," the inviolable Cadiz with its encircling wall that keeps the sea out, in Mary Peters' mind, stands above the ebbing and flowing tides of her human existence. She recalls its whiteness and compares it to all the white things she has known during her young life—"Monday sheets on Maine summer fields," "white Maine doorways," "the freshly painted spire of the church at home," "the crisp whiteness of a rare party frock," "the continual white wash of the ship," "the strange, incomprehensible coming of fog," "the white of infrequent snow," and "the white of nightdresses and petticoats and drawers" (4-5). She finds, however, that "Cadiz was whiter yet . . . as she stood there gazing upon it on that June morning" (5). It is a "white and shining" place that remains forever "far down in the very bottom of her mind" (Chase, *Asse* 58). Mary Peters, like Eliza Chase in her granddaughter's essay "Not in Cadiz," would remember the old city when time and chance and tragedy had taken all:

That shining whiteness she was never in all her life to forget. Although she saw it then for the first and the last time, Cadiz ever afterward was to remain in her mind through many varying years as the imperishable symbol of security, stability, and quiet order—a place both unassailable and unafraid, a place where one actually knew where one was in a wide, colossal world of uncertainty, a still harbour which had, as it were, miraculously caused to cease the creakings and groanings, bangings and slattings of wood and iron, rope and canvas, all the multifarious and incessant uproar of a ship making small way in bad weather. Flashing upon her tired little mind and longing eyes in one ecstatic vision of pure delight, it was not unlike the beatific vision of the City of Heaven to the Apostle, transcending in jasper bulwarks and blazing emerald street all earthly perplexities and sorrows. Here, to Cadiz, although she little realized it then, she was in spirit to return, not once but many times, as some ancient, long-established truth, no tool of time, no prey to uncertainty, invulnerable against anxiety, suspense, and sorrow of the life she was to live (6).

Mary Peters finds within Cadiz a whiteness and brightness—a pure and beneficent light of hope—which illuminates the darkest hours of her life. All the other white things she has ever known are merely coverings which in a sense hide or obscure the true essence of life and its perceptions—dresses, nightdresses and petticoats hide the human form; fog, white wash, and snow cover buildings and ships. The whiteness of Cadiz, unlike these things, comes from a glaring and tropical sun that sends up “thin lines of light from its many spires” (8). Like the brilliant and half-blinding vision of Saint John’s New Jerusalem, it signifies a new revelation and dispensation making easier the spiritual burdens of humanity—the earth and all earthly trials will one day pass away, and hope and security, as symbolized by the City of Heaven, will last forever. John Iorio rightly states that Mary Peters’ life “is a symphony which for all its pervading sadness and tragedy celebrates the

eternal strength of life, dignity, and serenity in the midst of adversity” (26). Mary, then, is able to meet the deaths of her various family members, her first love, her husband, and her material poverty with the assurance that her memory of Cadiz contains within itself the ability to “set things straight after confusion and disaster and to keep things [throughout her life] in working order” (7).

The first example of this “working order” comes hard upon Mary’s return to Petersport in her fourteenth year. Her mind and spirit, freshly beset with anguish over the loss of the *Elizabeth* and the ensuing hardships of her life on land, fly once again to Cadiz, her “imperishable symbol of security, stability, and quiet order.” She seeks and finds a spiritual order and harmony amidst the chaos and confusion that has overtaken her very human life. The familiar images of the old Spanish city arising in her mind becomes her coping mechanism, setting to rights all things that are beyond her control. During her initial grief, Mary’s remembrance of a “little brooch she had bought in Cadiz” as a child calms “the images [of death and destruction] . . . in her overwrought imagination” (88-91). She cannot avoid the inevitable; she must accept whatever life brings her way. As Virginia Smith Hall writes, “Life . . . can’t be planned. It can’t be explained. One accepts what it brings—and it is likely to bring anything—with good thoughts and good memories as a comfort” (110). Mary will enter the Academy and will adjust to a land-based existence as much as she detests the thought. She will accept the recent deaths of her father and Mr. Gardiner without allowing grief to overtake and destroy the beauty of living her life to the fullest. On her first night in Petersport, less than a week after the drownings of her father and Mr. Gardiner, the man she secretly loves, Mary’s mind floats back through the years to Spain. We are told that on that

first night at home in the red-brick house with its white gate she dreamed of Cadiz, its towers and turrets mounting on its headland, its sunswept streets and walls, all white and shining as she had known it years ago. Her father was with her on its broad promenade above the sea. He had a guitar held by a red cord around his neck which embarrassed him so greatly that he turned all at once into Mr. Gardiner.

It was wonderful to walk there with Mr. Gardiner in the dazzling sunshine with the broad leaves of palm trees swaying in the light wind and a riot of flowers clambering up and down every white wall they passed. They stopped now and then to look at the harbour below them, blue and strewn with all manner of ships. She told him she thought he was dead, but he laughed at her with the old, steady look in his eyes which she had known and loved. Then with a mighty thump of his brown hand on the white balustrade of the promenade he swore he would sail ships all his life, ships with never an engine inside them, ships that spread their canvas until they dropped below the horizon in a last glow of light. A Spanish lady drew near them then with a flower in her hand and tried to kiss Mr. Gardiner, but instead he turned from her and kissed Mary in a kiss that lasted longer than she had ever supposed a mere kiss could last.

When she awoke, she was crying into her pillow. The east was streaked with pale light. She watched the dark hills of Mt. Desert, which on the south enclosed the harbour from the open sea, soften and grow blue before sunrise. Beyond them, out of sight, lay the world she had known. Near at hand tumbled small, uneven fields bounded by stonewalls aflame with goldenrod. An old, untended orchard sprawled over a neighboring hillside. Gardens in rangy disorder of early autumn interspersed the meadows here and there. Rock-strewn, fir-clad pastures mounted the harbour hills. A cock was crowing somewhere. She had left the sea and was at home (94-95).

In this passage, Mary Peters, unaccustomed to life on land, yearns for the freeness of her former life on the sea, but she accepts what time, chance, and tragedy have thrust upon her. She is still deeply mourning the deaths of her father and Mr. Gardiner. Both men

meet her in the wonderful Cadiz, a heavenly and mental refuge where all things at once are possible. Cadiz symbolizes a freeness of spirit that cannot be conquered so long as “some good, sacred memory, preserved from childhood” is cherished and retained; not even the sorrowful and commonplace surroundings of Mary Peters’ hometown—“the uneven fields bounded by stone walls,” “an old, untended orchard sprawled over a neighboring hillside,” and the “gardens in rangy disorder,” which represent the same mental, spiritual, and social boundaries that Eliza Chase and other sea-going women found so impinging and distasteful on their returns to Blue Hill, can hold or retard the spirit or the mind intent upon saving itself from despair and bitterness.

The fact that Mary’s dream of Cadiz precedes the dawning of her first full day in Petersport, coming at the darkest hour of the night, is highly significant too. Mary must begin her new life with the new day. The rooster crows, the autumn sun slowly rises over the Maine hills, and she finds herself in a locality, as she soon realizes, that is shut away from the larger world and where people are stunted in their emotional and spiritual growth. But the dream of Cadiz, and the emotions it evokes, provides Mary with a moment of epiphany that brings light out of the darkness that has become her life and that also transcends her temporal state. She feels “a new sense of safety” in her remembrance of the past (94). And even though “she thought she ought to hate [the sea] as she saw the surf pounding the brown ledges and ringing distant lighthouses with white spray” because “it had killed her father [and because her beloved] Mr. Gardiner lay somewhere within its waters,” she could feel “no hatred” (94). Mary Peters “could not hate that which had been all the life [she ever] knew” (94). Her life on the land without her father or Mr. Gardiner will not be easy, but the memory of Cadiz will transform her loss into gain, her

restlessness into contentment, and her grief into joy simply because her spirit has found a way in which to transcend the material world and all its problems. Her character, as Elienne Squire suggests, epitomizes and “affirms Chase’s belief in the limitless potential of the human soul, that through consciousness of the past, one can experience a spiritual rebirth” (114). In the words of Perry Westbrook, Mary Peters “is born again in spirit” each and every time her memory transports her back to the Cadiz of her childhood (159).

If Cadiz represents spiritual freedom from the material world, it then makes beautiful Mary Peters’ life in the same way it inspired Mary Ellen Chase, her aunt, and her grandmother. They all sought in one way or another to live “on the spiritual level where vicissitude does not penetrate,” and they began “to live religiously” because “such [a] life [free from material and societal encumbrances was their true] religion” (Westbrook 159). This idea becomes evident during Mary’s uneasy assimilation and acclimation into village life. The cultural mores of the fictional Petersport are exactly those found in nineteenth-century Blue Hill, and the Peters women, like the Chase women, do not allow themselves to become bordered and bounded by village opinion or notions of village respectability. This, for Mary’s part, is signified by what Cadiz can represent in terms of love and personal relationships. In her dream of Cadiz, Mr. Gardiner, the man who is both her tutor and her best friend, kisses her passionately: “a kiss,” we are told, “that lasted longer than she had ever supposed a mere kiss could last.” Although this does not seem shocking or extraordinary to a twenty-first century audience, such an event would have flown in the face of the Victorian standards of Petersport, Maine. Grown men, with the possible exception of fathers and brothers, did not kiss teen-age girls, and teen-age girls, if they were “respectable” and concerned at all about

their reputations, were not supposed to contemplate or permit such sensuous and licentious behavior. Those who did were considered erring and sinful creatures who could not, for a moment, be trusted to exercise sexual restraint. We are told that the elders of the village, concerned over the well-being of the young people in their midst, “frowned upon dancing and upon kissing games; and if on sleigh parties their watchful eyes had reason to suspect the holding of two mittened hands beneath a buffalo robe or horse blanket, they felt in duty bound to speak to the girl concerned, for it was a maxim of the [eighteen] eighties that ‘a young woman could and should control any such situation’” (111).

Mary Peters, like Eliza Chase, takes Cadiz as an antidote to the type of Puritanism that engulfs village society. Cadiz, in this case symbolizing the collective experiences of the seafaring life, keeps her mental horizons clear and free from the unnecessary, prohibitive, and dogmatic rules of personal conduct imposed by an unrelenting and uncompromising religious faith. She thinks her own thoughts and dreams her own dreams while the general population of Petersport muddles through in the strict Puritan way it always has. While she behaves in a seemly and dignified fashion acceptable to her fellow New Englanders, she, under the guidance of her intelligent and worldly-wise mother, does not allow her mind to be “hemmed in by village trifles or shocked by village misdemeanors” (Chase, *Fellowship* 21). And, she gradually realizes that the “the two white churches,” although an important and integral part of village life, are “as lovely and gracious in their architecture as they [are] cramped and forbidding in their theology ” (104). Within this environment, the Peters women, citizens of the larger world and possessors of a knowledge reaching far beyond the confines of Petersport, Maine, “felt

like strangers in more ways than one although neither admitted her feeling to the other” (116).

These particular ideas are best played out in the forbidden relationship that develops between Hester Wood and Jim Pendleton four years after Mary and Sarah Peters return to Petersport. Hester and Jim are young and in love, and they are strongly attracted to each other physically. In a moment of passion that we as readers are not privy to, these two young people give in to their sexual desires for each other, setting in motion a series of events that nineteenth-century Petersport cannot fully understand and certainly will never sanction. Jim, knowing that he has made a terrible mistake and that he has compromised Hester’s reputation, abruptly leaves Maine for New York City. Hester, a girl of just eighteen who is pregnant with his child, dies in premature childbirth after throwing herself from a speeding wagon while enroute to the annual church bazaar. No one in Petersport, including the three members of the Peters family, realizes just how involved the two young people have become until their story has reached its sad conclusion. The circumstances surrounding Hester’s early death shock all who know of it, most especially her own mother, a woman who has not traveled or experienced much beyond the boundaries of her own hometown and its proscribed way of thinking. Wrong is always wrong, and those who sin so shamefully, in Mrs. Wood’s Calvinistic opinion at least, deserve to be punished by a strict, wrathful, and vengeful God. It is Mary’s mother, Sarah Peters, however, who puts everything into a relative and proper perspective. She, in spite of the standards and prejudicial judgements of Petersport society, quickly reminds her children of a reality and a sensibility which is the hallmark of all people who have followed the sea. As an informed citizen of the wide world, she, in a matter of

speaking, proudly proclaims herself one of those sea-going women who “had played too many games with Death to cherish sure and certain notions as to the best means of dealing with life” (Chase, *Fellowship* 22). After Hester’s untimely death, the removal of her body and that of her child from the Peters’ home, and the return of Mary and John from her mother’s home in nearby Barrett’s Bay, Sarah addresses her children in a direct and unflinching manner:

“I’ve got something to say to you children. You’re worn out, I know, and it’s probably not the time to say it, but it has to be said some time or other, and now’s the only time I know. You can cry, Mary. It’s good for you. Cry away. And you, John, can stay on the farm a week if you like without coming home. But now’s my time and you have to listen to me.”

“Probably I’ll never speak to you again like this—so far as I know I never have spoken like this—but this time you’ll have to listen, and it wouldn’t be a bad notion if you understand at the beginning that I know more about some things than either of you . . . But there’s something more terrible than what you’ve gone through, and that is the thoughts that you keep in your minds about it.”

“ . . . You’ve got to get out of your heads the notion that [Hester and Jim] did a wrong and sinful thing. Youth is hard until it comes up against the very thing it condemns. It was ill-judged and unwise, but it wasn’t wrong, at least in itself. It was wrong only in that it has brought suffering and pain to themselves and to others. Hester hasn’t died in disgrace. Don’t keep that thought in your heads even if it never leaves her mother’s. When the next century comes along and I’m perhaps dead and gone, you’ll see people looking at things like this differently . . .”

“We ought to realize that we’ve had a different life from most in this village. We’ve known the world, all parts of it, and we can’t be shut in by these streets and hills. If you children are, then you are unfair to what you’ve seen and known . . . And, Mary, you and I have had enough in our lives to keep us from being cramped in our minds. This

thing will leave a scar, I know that, but the best way to handle scars, after you've seen them straight, is to remember things big enough to wipe them out. That's the only way I know to steer one's course in this world. And we've been face to face with the biggest things there are, things so big that the memory of them ought to leave no room for small thoughts. Remember those days in the doldrums when we waited and waited for a wind to fill our sails. Well, it came, didn't it? After we'd waited till we thought we couldn't wait any longer? It came, and we went on again. You'll go on again, too, if you just get your thoughts straight and wait long enough" (196-200).

Sarah Peters' advice to her children in this passage provides one of the most moving and dramatic portions of the novel and is reminiscent of Chase's essay, "Not in Cadiz." Just as Cadiz allowed the young Eliza Chase an opportunity to live a life unlike any she had ever known at home in Blue Hill, Sarah Peters has also seen an outlying world that has broadened her perspective, a perspective that is at complete variance with village opinion and that bespeaks of the not-too-distant future. She is neither shocked by the Wood-Pendleton relationship nor she is willing to condemn their actions or their souls to perdition. Talking of the entire affair, she further states that

" . . . there are forces in this world that no one's really to blame for, forces that take people and hurl them along before they know they're taken, forces that beat them in spite of all they can do. I'm not saying they ought not to know or that they ought to be beaten. I just say they *don't* know and they *are* beaten. And sometimes even when they do know, they know too late."

"And all sorts of things determine those forces, race and inheritance and bringing up—things that a person can't be held responsible for" (197-198).

Even though she believes that the world will eventually see such cases differently, Sarah Peters possesses the satisfaction of knowing that in her place and at her time she has, by example and precept, led her own children toward a larger understanding of human nature in the hopes that they might exhibit a greater compassion toward human frailty. Although they may be caught in the doldrums of Petersport's stagnant and unchanging puritanical opinion, the ever changing, ever invigorating winds, signifying a freedom of thought and of life unknown to the villagers, will catch their sails, allowing them to make mental ports of safety and security against the storms and tides which will threaten their respective lives and their spiritual ships or souls. By their own "inheritance and bringing up," the Peters children have traveled the wide world accumulating a knowledge and a point of view large enough to render village opinion and narrow-mindedness inconsequential. The personal scars of life—those ravages of time, chance, and tragedy—seem as nothing in comparison to the collective scars shared by humanity throughout the world and throughout the ages. It is by remembering where they have been, what they have seen and heard, and what they have experienced that the Peters family keeps from falling prey to local pettiness and the persistent type of despair that a life devoid of outside mental and spiritual stimuli can produce. All those forces beyond their control will not beat Mary and her brother so long as they know that these forces exist and must be contended with within their own lives.

Mary, even before she hears her mother's stirring monologue, begins to bind her emotional wounds and to steer her course through a labyrinth of conflicting feelings. During the long wagon trip back to Petersport on the night of Hester's death, she remembers Cadiz once again, catching a mental glimpse of what her mother will later

relate: ““This thing will leave a scar, I know that, but the best way to handle scars, after you seen them straight, is to remember things big enough to wipe them out. That’s the only way I know to steer one’s course in this world.”” Looking at the full moon from the Salt Pond Bridge, the place where Hester threw herself from the wagon just hours before, Mary, having faced the deaths of her father and Mr. Gardiner, knows this almost intuitively. She realizes

that elsewhere, too, the moon was high, or rising, or waning. She knew that over the sea it had this very night freed patient ships from fog. She knew that in these hours it had already sailed serenely above birth and death, love and hatred, fear and longing, in a thousand far corners of the earth, in Liverpool behind its muddy river, in Cadiz white on its high impregnable hill. She knew that numberless hearts had seen in its tranquil unconcern either the fulfillment of their joys or the cruel antithesis of their pain (194-195).

The moon—the heavenly body which controls the ebbing and flowing tides—sees the human tides of both joy and sorrow. It shines upon the ugliness and squalor of Liverpool, and it shines upon the beauty of “Cadiz white on its high impregnable hill.” It also shines upon Mary and her brother, and it cannot be shut out of the streets and hills of Petersport, Maine. For her own sake and for the sake of her spiritual as well as mental health, Mary once again returns to Cadiz “as to some ancient, long-established truth . . . invulnerable against the anxiety, suspense, and sorrow” she finds within her own human condition and experience. Hester may be dead; Jim may have run off in shame and cowardice, but, as Edward Weeks, Chase’s long-time friend, said in his review of *Mary Peters*, her character, more than anything else, exemplifies “the tradition of a coastal people who . . . went to sea and who there acquired a philosophy and

resourcefulness which never deserted them though they might retire to upland farms or drowsy villages” (Wood 256).

In the end, Mary Peters, left alone with her handicapped sister-in-law, comes to the realization that her life, although painful in so many instances, has been both full and beautiful. She can cope with a seemingly forlorn future because her past has been both eventful and inspiring. She has lived through and survived circumstances and tragedies which could have easily made her an embittered old woman. But, by accepting what life has brought her way and by keeping a positive attitude in the face of things she is unable to change, she quietly turns her tragedies into triumphs. She does not complain or bemoan her state; she simply goes about her business with no thought of regret or remorse, finding mental and spiritual freedom because “nothing was ever final; nothing was ever lost” (86). Mary’s philosophy, like that her mother’s, is based upon the belief that life will be full by simply “waiting for things to turn out well” (Barstow, 58).

Remorse and regret cannot gain foothold within the life of a person patient enough to wait reflectively for everything to right itself in the long run. For Mary, any feelings of sorrow she may have experienced throughout her life are quickly superseded by the good memories of her childhood. She embodies Chase’s reverence for the past which is incorporated into the present and which determines the future. As her husband, Jim Pendleton, tells her soon after they are married, ““You’re old, Mary. There’s nothing new about you. You’re full of old places and old thoughts. Don’t you understand? That’s why you can’t be touched or—or frightened by new, untried things”” (316-317). When Mary, questioning his logic, tells him she has never paid much heed to the future, he responds, ““You don’t have to . . . because you carry yours along with you”” (316).

Her future is secure within her own resourcefulness, a resourcefulness that is both defined and explained by all that has transpired during her early life and by everything that has gone before in the course of human history. Mary Peters, Elienne Squire explains, “can survive with dignity by drawing strength from the deepest sources of her soul, the well-springs of love and compassion” (96).

Mary, remembering the pristine image of Cadiz and the other memories of her life upon the sea, is emotionally sustained while toiling on a small and unproductive upland farm and caring for a relative who is both demanding and mean-spirited. She exhibits a care and concern—a love and compassion—toward Ellen that is made possible only through the life-lessons she has learned. Mary neither blames Ellen for her dalliance with the unfaithful Jim Pendleton, nor does she blame her for his tragic death. External forces—feelings of inadequacy, loneliness, and boredom bred by life in a small Maine town—drew them together. Contemplating the situation, Mary realizes early on that “Ellen’s life stretched ahead of her, probably years of existence, barren, meager, unsatisfied, because of Ellen herself, [but] her own life was none of these things wherever it was spent . . . It was still free and stable” (356-357). As she and her sister-in-law begin their lives together after the deaths of their respective husbands and as they become proficient in the creation of hand-hooked rugs, Mary is able to return again and again to her childhood memories—finding the energy and resilience to continue in a life so circumscribed, so physically demanding, and so completely mundane that its very monotony seems both agonizing and unbearable in the extreme. She, however, perseveres, and we are told that

through the tiny squares of burlap stretched upon her frames, [Mary] drew with her hook the first fifteen years of her life, translating into rug rags the things she had known and loved. She hooked a merchant ship on a dark blue sea, no staid ship but one with sails set before a wind which became visible even as one looked upon them. She hooked a flight of birds moving above a gray ocean toward a distant point of land. She hooked the port of San Francisco with the mountains of the Coast Range beyond it and the palms of the Java coast beneath a tropical moon. Under her fingers Valparaiso rose on its hill above its horned harbour . . . She hooked lighthouses, red-sailed fishing craft in foreign ports, surf breaking upon a reef . . .

She became an expert in dyeing bits of wool, working hours to get the exact shade she needed. When her piece-bags and closets were exhausted of old material, she bought odds and ends from factories and coloured them to suit herself. The knuckles of her fingers and the palms of her hands grew rough and calloused by hook and burlap, but she had never in her life felt more free (367-368).

Mary Peters, like her creator and her creator's aunt, finds a way to turn personal recollections into art, which also frees her soul and allows personal growth to continue during hard times and through difficult circumstances. Although the world may see Mary Peters' life as a failure, she is actually, on the moral and spiritual levels, at least, a triumphant conqueror and heroine. John Iorio writes that

whatever the reasons behind the fascination for physical failure, much of American literature has seen and continues to see man's will as impotent and inoperable in its confrontation with external forces. Yet, at the same time, this literature produces a counterforce—a belief, at times mystical, in man's invincibility and endurance . . . In Miss Chase's fiction this belief becomes the heart of her drama and the major metaphor of her vision. If the physical action of her novels gives us a movement towards disaster and pain, moral action is the movement towards man's invincibility. The fiction of failure becomes the fiction of humility and strength (32).

Mary Peters is, indeed, as invincible as she is humble. She does not judge others, and she does not think that she has all the answers to the questions of life. She personifies the old New England ideal that life's problems must be met stoically. But, Mary Peters, unlike many of her peers, does so with an optimistic sense of hope and of fulfillment. For, as John Iorio further writes, "a world without hope is a world without freedom and responsibility" (33). In other words, Mary Peters' pain is swallowed up by the sense that life is whatever a person chooses to make of it regardless of personal difficulties, privations, and adversities. She may, as Perry Westbrook points out, "live on the material level and live a slave," or she may "live on the spiritual level where vicissitude does not penetrate" (159). Mary Peters lives her life on the spiritual level.

At the end of the novel, Mary Peters, thinking back upon her life, hooks a rug that is intended to represent her childhood vision of Cadiz. This vision and the creation of art it ultimately produces, as Evelyn Dodge rightly states, is a positive "way of thought that often makes it easier for some people to understand their own experiences in concrete terms and to attach to places, either consciously or unconsciously, certain values which are not usually shared by others" (115-116). Cadiz, in this case at least, is symbolic of Mary's whole life experience—showing the extent to which her early years at sea have defined her subsequent life, making the ravages of old age and poverty more bearable because she knows just how much she has overcome in the course of her life. Hazel Hawthorne, reviewing *Mary Peters* for the *New Republic* does not agree. She states that Mary's "return to Cadiz [at the end of the novel] by way of fashioning a hooked rug seems inadequate . . . [and] really tragic" (344). While Hawthorne may not appreciate Chase's choice of folk-art as Mary's preferred medium of expression, Mary's spiritual

return to Cadiz through the creation of a rug is neither inadequate nor is it tragic. The rug she so successfully hooks is the magnum opus of her life, the synthesis of everything she has experienced and has so triumphantly survived. True to her reserved Yankee character, Mary mentions her intentions to no one, and week by week, as she takes great pains to dye the necessary wool to the exact shades needed to recreate the city as she saw it on that June morning in her ninth year, and as she carefully lays out her sketch of Cadiz upon rough burlap, she reflects upon all that Cadiz has meant to her. The reverence she has for Cadiz is clearly evident, and her re-creation of the city takes on a sense of religious devotion and self-sacrifice. She gives all the time she can spare to this endeavor, and she spends her already scanty funds to buy the best materials available. In the act of creating art, Mary is freed from her immediate surroundings, and she does not mind the material and physical sacrifices she has had to make because

she was forever conscious that she lived two lives, the effulgence of one so irradiating the pale light of the other that it was often dimmed or put completely out of sight. There was her life with Ellen, material, tangible, restrictive, its demands continuous even when they were pleasantly made; and there was her life without Ellen, omnipresent as Ellen was. Whether this other life was one of voluntary or involuntary abstraction (possessions which will ever be the most intact and sound of social virtues) she could not have said. She knew only that she was constantly aware of it within and without her, in her thoughts, in the things she loved and valued, in her past which had placed its own imperishable perception upon thoughts and things. She could perform her daily tasks for Ellen, menial, sometimes ugly and humiliating, and yet herself be anywhere under the sun. She could talk trivialities with Ellen for hours on end without being for a moment touched by one of them. She lived what most would call, what, indeed, most did call, a grueling and circumscribed existence, knowing full well it might go on for years; and yet, true to her heritage, she was forever a spectator of it rather than a sharer in it,

knowing better that it had no power to make the least
inroad upon the other and larger life (360).

Mary Peters, like some busy and harried nun who must spend her life attending to others
and their needs, cherishes her time spent in this personal meditation and contemplation.

We are told that

after she had been for two years at her work she began
upon a rug which she meant to work on at odd moments for
any length of time, not anxious as to its completion. She
cleared a room in the ell of its furniture and erected there a
larger frame than she had ever used, a frame with cross
pieces and understops to hold it closely together, for she
needed above all space for this hooking. Once her design
was made, she began her work, giving a few minutes or an
hour or two a day as she could. It was pleasant to work
alone in the low western room with the afternoon sun
streaming in across the ridges and open fields. The wool
she used was the best she could procure, new wool which
she bought undyed and dyed herself to be sure she had the
exact colour.

From the brown burlap the sea rose slowly, deep blue as the
Atlantic neared the Mediterranean, and set here and there
by all manner of ships, their rigging as complete as she
could make it. There arose, too, as time went on, a high,
white city above a white wall which kept out the sea—a
city of towers and domes and minarets, so outlined in
darker wools, so shaded with bits of blue and palest yellow,
that one not only saw their relation to one another but
received as well the indelible impression that the city was
bathed in sunlight. Three years went into its making, odds
and ends of days when she could leave Ellen by herself,
hours stolen from hooking the rugs that had been ordered.
When it was done, she spread it upon the floor of her
sitting-room below the Antwerp portraits [of her ancestors]
and the pictures of [their] sailing ships (369-370).

Mary Peters serenely hooks a rug that leaves “the indelible impression” of a
heavenly city “bathed in sunlight.” The city of her own creative construction is the same

one that has been indelibly impressed upon her mind since childhood—the city she has returned to at every trying and sorrowful juncture of her life. The Cadiz in the rug rises from a memory so ingrained within her that, as Allan Nevins has suggested, it has become truly “symbolic of Mary Peters’ mind” (160). Her mind is enlightened by her past, and although Mary may be hemmed in by the financial and social restraints of Petersport, Maine, she believes, as Chase herself did, that

people who have sprung from a [seafaring] past such as [Maine’s] cannot, if they are worthy of it, be narrow in their minds, intolerant in their views, provincial or unintelligent in their behavior. They cannot lose sight of what has made them, but must forever remember it and be grateful for it (“Noble History”).

That Mary Peters both remembers Cadiz and is grateful for her memory of it is implicit within her actions after the rug is completed. While she must sell her other rugs to support herself, she refuses to part with her artistic rendition of Cadiz. To sell this particular rug with all the meaning behind it, she realizes, would be to sell a piece of her own immortal soul—a priceless entity that is far above the considerations of money and of monetary gain. The Cadiz within the rug, as an integral part of her innermost being, becomes a libation spread reverentially upon the floor beneath the portraits of her ancestors and the pictures of the ships that bore them to ports of distant call—making the spiritual connection between the past and the present and between Mary’s life and the lives of her predecessors. She refuses to show this rug to the tourists who call at her home looking for rugs with which to decorate their summer homes. Although she has little materially, she will keep the rug with her always. The rug, therefore, becomes symbolic of Mary’s future. Her future, regardless of its material poverty, will be full

because her past has been full. The rug, and the positive thoughts behind it, are not intended for sale; both are to be shared with only those persons who appreciate and revere the past and see within the past a hope for a future that is both productive and mentally stimulating.

In the end, the only outsider who is allowed to view the rug is a visitor who, as it turns out, shares a common heritage with Mary. The second Mr. Gardiner, the nephew of Mary's childhood friend and a visitor among the Petersport summer community, comes to Mary's home with his hostess, Mrs. Grace Hawley of New York City. While Mrs. Hawley and Ellen haggle over rugs and their prices, Mary begins a conversation with Mr. Gardiner, who is interested in his uncle's life and wants to know more of his own sea-going heritage. Mr. Gardiner has been looking for someone who knew his uncle, and Mary provides him with the information he has been seeking. He mentions a letter sent to his grandfather by Mary's mother after the loss of the *Elizabeth* and her crew. Chase writes that

Mary [Peters] Pendleton's heart quickened as she told him [about his late uncle]. She might have been fourteen again, she thought, reading Shakespeare on the quarterdeck in the sun. She told him all about young Mr. Gardiner, his hatred of steam, the geranium in his cabin, even about the robin in the Sargasso. The years slipped away from her as though they were not. She talked not of the past but of the present.

"I loved him as a little girl," she said simply, unsurprised at her saying it to someone who should have been a stranger. "I loved him as I've never loved anyone all my life."

Until that moment she had not known how true it was.

The man who sat beside her in the orchard felt as though he had known her always. She represented what his own people had represented, knew what his people had known.

Half-forgotten pride in his heritage came beating back upon him. They talked of ships and of what their voyages over the earth had meant to those who voyaged in them and to the towns and villages from whence they came (372-373).

In her conversation with the second Mr. Gardiner, Mary's life is rounded into a perfect whole. As the two stand looking at Mary's creation of Cadiz, the past and the present merge and become one. For these two people, the past and the present are no longer two separate periods devoid of meaning each to the other—they are the positive precursors of the future for all those people who are, like themselves, able and willing to reflect upon what had once been and now is. Both Mary and Mr. Gardiner realize that the Maine coast has changed much during their lifetimes. Shipping has faded away, and in its place, tourism has sadly become the preeminent coastal industry. Summer people have snatched up the old Petersport homes of sea captains; old New England pastures have given way to golf links and country clubs. Yachting is virtually the only sailing that is now done on native waters. Mr. Gardiner tells Mary, "I'm sorry the coast has had to change so, sorry that these things are only memories" (374). But, for the aging Mary, this change of economy, like the loss of all her family members, is swallowed up in her good memories of the past. While talking with Mr. Gardiner, a man she recognizes as a kindred spirit, she is transported back to Cadiz and to her life upon the sea. In his voice and through his vivacious, understanding personality, Mary, we are told, "heard again . . . the continual wash of the sea, the whine of stout new cordage, the whistles of the wind through taut and straining sails . . . she smelt again the smell of tar and hemp and salt" (373). Just as her mother advised many years before, she is steering her course through the material, changing world and toward a promising, but as yet unknown, future. Mr. Gardiner, speaking of his son who is engaged to Mrs. Hawley's daughter and who is

unfamiliar with Maine's sea-going past, gives rise to a further sense of this future. He tells Mary, "I don't know about my son . . . But perhaps when he comes here next summer, a woman like you could teach him . . . You seem to know the things all people ought to know, but don't" (374). Mary Peters' knowledge of things other people should know and do not, as John Iorio rightly says, contains "elegies, catalogues of defeat, monuments to loyalty and heritage, affirmations of ancestral strength, and hymns to permanence" (24). She, and she alone, is left to make sense of all that she has experienced in her life; she, a person who has never been consciously concerned about the future before, is the one and only person left to pass her knowledge of "the other and larger life" on to the younger generation. Looking toward the sea after Mr. Gardiner's departure, Mary Peters is secure in her knowledge of the world, and she places faith and trust in its sometimes-painful ways of dealing with humanity. Remembering a long-ago conversation with the first Mr. Gardiner, Mary once again sees

a schooner . . . lying there, all her sails set to advantage her slow course shoreward. The last rays of sunlight caught them, and they glowed for some moments on the still sea.

Mary Pendleton wanted for nothing as she sat there . . . She had nothing to regret, everything to remember with gratitude. Most people were wrong about life, she thought. It was not a struggle against temptation as she had been taught in church. Nor was it a search for truth as the philosophers said, or even for happiness, much as humanity craved happiness. It was rather a kind of waiting—a waiting upon the graciousness and bounty of the things which had been, in order that the things to come might find one free and unafraid . . .

The sails of the schooner were lost in the fading light. She saw the mist rise from the fields and meadows. Those who had written the books which she loved were right. Earth was still the ancient lifegiver, and the broad-backed sea the dispenser of many gifts (377).

Mary has come to the realization that her memories of the seafaring life have enabled her to face all things with courage, understanding, and contentment. As the first Mr. Gardiner, talking of the seafaring life, told her while they watched a ship dip below the horizon, "It's only the sails and the glow on them that we'll remember . . . that's what you'll remember all your life" (70). And we, as readers, are left with the pervasive and persistent feeling that she, at the onset of the Great Depression, will teach Mr. Gardiner's son, a Harvard graduate and a New York businessman who will eventually be plagued by his own set of problems, how to best "form a mind and imagination invulnerable against time, chance and tragedy."

With the publication of *Mary Peters* and the critical acclaim that followed in its wake, Mary Ellen Chase immediately began researching and writing *Silas Crockett*. This novel, published in the autumn of 1935, is rightly termed a family saga, a novel delineating four generations of a Maine family who, for better or for worse, are tied to the sea by their vocations, traditions, and memories. In her "Foreword" to *Silas Crockett*, Chase writes, "In this story of four generations of a Maine seafaring family I have attempted to picture maritime life on the coast for one hundred years . . . [and] because of the nature of my subject I have purposely placed more emphasis upon setting and character than upon plot and incident" (ix). The novel is actually broken into four sections that represent the gradual economic and social decline of coastal Maine through the presumably fictional members of the Crockett family between the years 1830 and 1930.

"Silas Crockett, 1830-1850" deals with a young man, born to an already successful and proud seafaring family of Saturday Cove, Maine, who will participate

personally in the glory days of the American Merchant Marine. In 1830, at the age of twenty-three, he marries Solace Winship, the daughter of a local sailor turned prosperous carpenter. The couple spends much of their married life sailing on “far voyages” as Silas is involved in the tea trade with mainland China. Silas dies of an infection in 1864 after pulling porcupine quills from the mouth of the family dog, and his early death spares him from the complete dissolution of the shipping industry, which, by the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, has already begun. Solace, who lives to the age of eighty, spends the remainder of her life living in the old Crockett house where she reflects upon the many changes she has seen and experienced in her long and productive life.

“Nicholas Crockett, 1850-1875,” Silas’ only son and heir, born some twenty years after Silas and Solace are married, will witness, and suffer from, the waning of New England’s influence in the shipping business due to the advent of steamships and the changing economy after the American Civil War. Sadly, steamships become faster and more reliable than sail, and the settlement and the industrialization of the American West have made imported commodities less needed by American consumers. He will, however, uphold and continue the Crockett family tradition, making two voyages on a sailing vessel as first mate before death overtakes him at the young age of twenty-five. He marries Deborah Parsons, his childhood sweetheart and the daughter of the local academy’s headmaster. Unlike her mother-in-law who is the product of another seafaring family, she does not appreciate her husband’s preoccupation with the sea and wind-driven ships; this fact causes great resentment and strife within the Crockett-Parsons marriage and eventually leads to Nicholas’ death.

“Reuben Crockett, 1875-1910,” Nicholas’ son, is born six months after his father dies of exposure on a Maine ship “fishing for cod off the Banks of Newfoundland” (“Novels” 19). Nicholas, on leave from his clipper ship the *Mildred May*, cannot stand Deborah’s constant badgering about his choice of occupation, and in a moment of desperation, takes the fishing job to escape her wrath. After the crew of the *Lydia* makes a successful haul for cod, Nicholas freezes to death during the nightwatch. Deborah eventually remarries and then moves to Boston, but she has neither love nor time for her four-year-old son; he is a continual reminder of her life with Nicholas, and she feels a sense of guilt concerning the events that resulted in his early death. She returns to Maine only twice in forty years; she attends Solace’s funeral when her son is fourteen, and her body is brought back to Saturday Cove for burial after her own death in 1924.

Reuben Shaw Crockett, named for a great uncle who was lost at sea in 1822, is raised in the old Crockett home by his grandmother, Solace, who instills in him the importance of his maritime heritage. Reuben, who does not have the sea-going opportunities open to him that his grandfather and father had in their youth, is a plodding and moderate fellow. He displays none of the vigor and exuberance that the earlier Crockett men have been noted for, but he loves the Crockett homestead and is fascinated by his grandmother’s tales of the old seafaring life. He graduates from high school, goes to work as a clerk for the Eastern Steamship Line, and attains the rank of captain after a period of some ten years. He becomes a man of great wisdom and skill, knowing that the perils of coastwise steaming, where unseen reefs and capricious weather can often spell doom for the unaccomplished novice, are, although lacking in maritime romance, as significant as those dangers encountered by his ancestors on their voyages around the

world. At the age of thirty-five, Reuben marries Huldah Barrett, the village schoolteacher and a deeply religious woman, who, a year later, becomes paralyzed during the birth of their only child. Beset with financial problems and failing health at the onset of the Great Depression, Reuben is forced to sell his ancestral home in Saturday Cove and removes with his family to extreme eastern Maine where he becomes the master of a ferryboat after the steamboat company finally goes bust. Reuben, like his elders, Silas and Nicholas, has given his entire life to the sea, and although he represents the lowest point in the economic and social decline of Maine maritime families, he enthusiastically tries to pass his reverence for the family's past on to his son.

"Silas Crockett, 2nd, 1910-1933," the son of Reuben and Huldah, grows up in a family that is fighting financially to survive amid forces they can neither control nor fully understand. Due to the bills incurred as a result of his mother's lengthy illness, the young Silas watches as his father sells off family heirlooms to disreputable antique dealers and haughty, condescending summer people for much needed cash. Silas is an intelligent youngster who prepares himself for college, but as a result of the family's poverty, is forced to drop out after two years to take a job in a local fish-packing plant. He meets and falls in love with Ann Sewall, a traveling nurse who comes to tend his mother and father in their old age and who is also a descendant of Maine seafaring stock. The second Silas and Ann, by their outlook and personal characteristics, are in a very real sense throwbacks to the noble past. The two become engaged to marry, and at the novel's end, Chase envisions their future together as being defined by the "things of imperishable value . . . [which] in the course of time . . . may assume another form" ("Noble History"). While they will never ply the waters of the world in wooden, wind-

powered ships of their own construction or live in grandly built homes, Silas, Ann, and their unborn children, as recipients and repositories of a goodly heritage, will lead lives as noble, courageous, and distinguished as those of their ancestors, the elder Silas Crockett and his wife, Solace (Winship) Crockett. Through their developing reverence for their heritage, they will also continue a tradition of mental reflection, which, in turn, will produce order and harmony amid the chaos and confusion of modern life. In short, Chase saw within these two fictional young people, and the people they were intended to represent, the distinctive characteristics and traits, the “thoughts, memories and values,” that she believed to be the best hope and mainstay for the American public as it weathered the economic difficulties of 1930s (“Noble History”).

Although Mary Ellen Chase looked optimistically to the past for answers and solutions to the problems of modern life, several New York literary critics found *Silas Crockett* of little relevance to modern society. Chase, as mentioned in the Familial Genealogy section of this thesis, was publicly harangued for writing a book, which, as the critics mistakenly asserted, had at its core, a desire to return to Maine’s past for the sake of that past alone. Amy Loveman, writing for the *Saturday Review of Literature*, states that “it is impossible to feel that Miss Chase in her commiseration [for Maine’s past] has entirely escaped sentimentality, even though setting and historical scene remain clear and convincing” (5). She also says, “Less individualized and striking are the generations that knew the decline and disappearance of the supremacy of sail . . . The end of her book, indeed, is unashamedly ‘sweet’ and does violence to the [novel’s overall] artistic integrity” (5). Fanny Butcher, in a review written for the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, also takes exception with Chase’s choices as a novelist. She writes that “*Silas Crockett* is in

the traditional manner of such sagalike tales, with everything done very well and properly technical, and nothing done with any ultradistinction . . . It is not . . . so vivid a book as was Miss Chase's *Mary Peters*" (17).

Such reviews prompted Chase to defend her artistic motives in *Silas Crockett* personally, a practice that she rarely and reluctantly condescended to. She resented, as an established writer who considered herself both a realist and a regionalist of some reputation, all accusations that her works were sentimental in nature, and therefore, were untrue to New England life and history or suffered from certain "escapist" tendencies. But, as Evelyn Dodge asserts in her study of *Silas Crockett*, "sentimentality, like many critical terms, does not always have a single, clear-cut meaning" (144). In her estimation of the subject and Chase's relation to it, there are two differing and separate types of sentimentality. The first is positive and is given to a high aspiration for humanity, while the second is negative and deals with the standard definition of sentimental literature: any story—most usually a melodrama—in which stereotyped characters engage in exaggerated conflicts and suffer from extreme emotional upheavals and excesses. Unfortunately, the critics taking the greatest exception with Chase and with *Silas Crockett* seem either unable or unwilling to differentiate between these two categories.

Dodge finds that Chase

is sometimes idealistic and is often concerned with the emotional aspect of experience. If to be these things is to be sentimental, then that is what she is. But if to be falsely or excessively emotional is to be sentimental, then she seldom is (144-145).

Chase's deference to what Dodge refers to as the "idealistic" and the "emotional aspect of experience" is quite evident in *Silas Crockett* and in her Humanistic defense of

the novel. She hoped, as the editor of the *Portland Sunday Telegram* relates, that *Silas Crockett*, like *A Goodly Heritage* and *Mary Peters*, would stir within her modern audience a positive response from the “portraits of the earlier people of Maine, mirroring the State’s original culture, nobility, and ever-lasting qualities” (“Writer-Teacher; Teacher Writer”). She could never have envisioned her work being placed within Dodge’s second category of sentimentality—works that were “falsely or excessively emotional.” Chase, as we know from her autobiographies, detested extremes of all sorts and kinds—most particularly those involving personal behavior and religion. She was, after all, a native New Englander and was raised within a family where the old-time Yankee reserve and Yankee reticence were equated with old-time Yankee virtue. Perry Westbrook, denoting Chase’s reserve and exploring the spiritual and idealistic underpinnings of *Silas Crockett*, states that

throughout her writing . . . Chase deplores rigidity, dogmatism, and excessive zeal in religion . . . [*Silas Crockett*] is a literary monument to the endurance of the human spirit . . . [It celebrates] the fortitude and vitality of people of similar Calvinistic background . . . [It admires] the traits of character that are the residual legacy of Calvinism: persistence, enterprise, and above all, loyalty to a tradition . . . (87).

One of the residual legacies of Calvinism not mentioned by Westbrook in this passage is, interestingly enough, the idea of Yankee stoicism—always keeping one’s emotions in check and always maintaining the stiff upper lip even during times of sadness or personal difficulty. This trait is the essence of the Yankee reserve that Chase knew during her childhood, and she incorporates this important attribute into almost all of her New England characters. As Virginia Smith Hall points out in her study of *Mary Peters*,

“Chase philosophizes that life, come what may, must be met stoically” (101). The same certainly may be said of the Crocketts for they too “have no control over what happens . . . [and they must] receive what happens in the best way possible” (Smith 101). If Calvinism had taught Chase nothing else, it had taught her that everything happened for a reason and that people must, therefore, accept life as it really was and is. There was no room for sentimentality in such a belief system, and in her construction of *Silas Crockett*, as shipping dies and tourism flourishes, Chase’s characters realize that they must simply live on, even though material poverty and a diminished way of life have become their portion. The Crocketts do not lament that they are not as they once were; though it is often difficult, they learn to accept what time, chance, and tragedy have thrust upon them. That is not to say, however, that they, in their century of social and economic decline, do not look idealistically to the past as an inspiration for the present and a hope for the future. They maintain a constant, albeit sometimes flickering, hope that brighter times may one day come again, for this too is a part of what Westbrook calls their Calvinistic “loyalty to a tradition.” Nothing of true value, Chase asserts throughout the novel, is ever really lost with the passing of time; the facts and figures may become obscured, but old New England families, like the Crocketts, intrinsically retain the best of the past as a part of their goodly heritage. And, as she writes in *A Goodly Heritage*, such New England people truly and optimistically believed “that out of simple beginnings, by toil, by adaptation to circumstances, and by seizure of occasions, one generation [could and would] give rise to a better” (16)

It was Chase’s own loyalty to this particular tradition in *Silas Crockett*, her quiet and idealistic belief in what she calls “the sacredness of tradition, the long dependence of

the present upon the past,” that was most probably misinterpreted as excessive sentiment by the New York critics (263). As she would strongly contend in her journal articles written in 1936 and in 1962, *Silas Crockett*, while meant to be idealistic and hopeful, did not idealize or misrepresent the past in the process. And, it was certainly never her intention to create an escapist work—a work in which the past is represented as being superior to the present in hopes that readers would retreat or return to that past as an easy escape from modern realities, perplexities, and problems. Chase meant the novel to be, as Perry Westbrook justly writes, “a literary monument to the endurance of the human spirit.” Chase, as we will soon see, believed that the human spirit remained the same although times changed, and she also believed that the lessons learned in nineteenth-century Maine could continue to be applicable and pertinent to her twentieth-century American audience if they, like the various members of the Crockett and Peters families, took time to reflect upon the richness of the past and their relation to it.

Nowhere is this idea more marked than in Chase’s personal defense of *Silas Crockett*. Her distrust of and her dissatisfaction with her critics culminated in “Any State With Noble History Such As Maine’s, Cherishes Her Past,” a lengthy article published in the August 30, 1936 edition of the *Portland Sunday Telegram*. Here, Chase—as writer, historian, genealogist, and Maine native—makes her strongest plea for a novel that the literary editor of the *Portland Sunday Telegram* calls “a valuable social history in which [the author] has depicted an era and the part Maine people played in it” (“Teacher-Writer; Writer-Teacher”). “Environment and tradition,” this same editor goes on to assert, “have always influenced Miss Chase in her writing” (“Teacher-Writer; Writer-Teacher”). Chase claimed the scenes and customs of her native Maine as her own, a portion of the

goodly heritage she inherited as a child in Blue Hill, and she had absolutely no intention of allowing uninformed critics, educated and respected though they might be, any latitude with the things most deeply ingrained within her. As an introduction to this article, Chase tenaciously sums up the crux of her problem with the critics willing to debase and devalue her novel:

Persons who write books learn early, if they are wise, not to be overly troubled by what critics and reviewers say of them unless those critics and reviewers are in a position to know intimately the things of which they speak because of a background common to that of the author or because of experience similar to his. When my book, *Silas Crockett*, was published nearly a year ago, certain New York reviewers, situated in places far from the scene of the life lived by various members of the Crockett family, accused me of certain things. They said that I was, first of all, idealizing a past which was long dead; secondly, that I was regretting the death of that past. It is of these accusations in the light of what they signify to Maine that I should like to speak in this short article ("Noble History").

Chase immediately goes on to say that the reviewers who leveled the severest criticism against *Silas Crockett* were not familiar enough with Maine history and with Maine people to render a trustworthy appraisal of the novel's worth. She writes,

I do not believe that these [New York] reviewers are right, largely because none of them, so far as I know, come from Maine or know intimately anything about it. If a Maine writer, Laura E. Richards, Robert P. T. Coffin, Gladys Hasty Carroll, Rachel Field, all of whom know the state as well as I or perhaps even better, had said these things, I should be troubled. So far as I know, again, none of them has said them ("Noble History").

Having made her point about who is and is not qualified to appraise *Silas Crockett*, Chase then argues that she does not idealize Maine's maritime past, but, through thorough and meticulous research, accurately depicts "an era and the people who made it what it was" ("Noble History"). The historical content of the novel was certainly not of her own construction; she merely served as the force who artistically clothed Maine's past in the garments of fiction, making its history vital and alive for readers who might never have been acquainted with the rise and fall of the State's maritime interests. She asserts that

no honest author reconstructs a past from his own mind or his own imagination or even from his own memory. I remember tales of the old life at sea, tales told me by my grandmother, who sailed with my grandfather . . . I remember other stories told me as a child by old sea captains who sailed as far back as 1830, the year when young Silas Crockett returned from Canton to Saturday Cove. I have in my possession old log-books, letters, and journals of that life at sea and in far places. These stories and journals are valuable and helpful, but they are not enough.

For the writing of *Silas Crockett*, I procured the best books I could find, books written by authorities on the maritime history of New England, chief among them Professor Samuel Eliot Morrison's wonderful book, *The Maritime History of Massachusetts*. The writers of these books have spent years in such places as the Essex Historical Institute in Salem, delving carefully, as all scholars must, into the historical records of past years.

In writing *Silas Crockett* I used these books, spending months in study and being sure before I wrote so much as a word, that my sources upheld me in all that I wrote. My book is not so much a novel as it is a social history ("Noble History").

Chase ends her article with her estimation of the past and its worth to modern readers. In her mind, the past could never die "so long as old libraries . . . preserve it, so long as old

homes still stand, so long as the coast retains its harbors, changed though they are, so long as [Maine people] make it [their] responsibility to preserve it in [their] thoughts and lives” (“Noble History”). Addressing her closing remarks directly to her Maine audience while piercing the reviews of the New York literati with some well-directed barbs, Chase stresses her sole purpose in writing *Silas Crockett*:

Lastly, do you and I regret that this past has gone beyond our nearer vision, and deplore the present as an era of lesser men and women and of lesser interest and idealism? Those who see in my books a wail of ‘nostalgia’ do not read them rightly. I have done my small best to preserve the past, not to wail over its departure. Gladys Hasty Carroll once made in an article a gracious and exact remark about my book, *A Goodly Heritage*. She said that instead of regretting the past was gone, I regarded it as a fine thing to move on from. That is precisely true. I believe that Maine people have a splendid heritage, both from sea and land, that it is the business of us all to live up to it, and, never losing sight of it, to move on from it, either in our own State or in the other states and countries, proving in ourselves that it has been and is of enduring value. People who have sprung from a past such as ours cannot, if they are worthy of it, be narrow in their minds, intolerant in their views, provincial or unintelligent in their behavior. They cannot lose sight of what has made them, but must forever remember it and be grateful for it, just as Reuben Crockett and young Silas [2nd] remembered and were grateful.

Silas Crockett was written about a *real* Maine past for Maine people at home and elsewhere . . . For such a past every Maine man, woman, and child should be forever grateful [emphasis added] (“Noble History”).

Whether or not Chase ever succeeded in fully vindicating herself in the eyes of “certain New York reviewers, situated in places far from the scene of the life lived by various members of the Crockett family,” remains to be seen, but judging from the reviews she received from her fellow New Englanders, her efforts in *Silas Crockett* were

not completely misunderstood. The novel, as she and the editor of the *Portland Sunday Telegram* state, was intended to be a social history of Maine life in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and empathetic literary scholars, most especially those with roots in Maine and New England, were quick to defend Chase's artistic intentions in this regard. They found within *Silas Crockett* "a real Maine past for Maine people at home and elsewhere." Mary Ross, in her succinct review of the novel, finds within "this New England chronicle . . . an eloquent and moving record not only of the past but of the potentialities of human beings in a world which they can manage except for the inevitable forces of death, personal disappointment, and the catastrophes of nature" (5). She also says, "I do not know whether or not Miss Chase meant [the novel] to be read as such, but it seems to me a challenge to the present" (5). D. L. Mann, writing for the *Boston Transcript*, calls *Silas Crockett* "the epic of Maine seafaring" (1). "It is quite possible," he further writes, "that nothing will ever be written which will reveal so clearly the glory and the tragedy which befell the State . . . Not often can we hope to find the American scene and American character depicted with such importance and such complete understanding" (1). Chase's close personal friend and fellow Maine writer, Robert P. T. Coffin, also suggests that

in *Silas Crockett*, Mary Ellen Chase has added one more volume, and her loveliest, to her history of a culture. She is writing the story of the state, and the state of grace, which was the Maine of her seafaring ancestors. That Maine culture was one in which pomp and principle went hand in hand, and Miss Chase makes both shine like the shores and houses among which they flourished (191).

And, Lewis Gannett, a former Maine resident writing for the *New York Herald Tribune*, echoing his fellow critics, D. L. Mann and Stanley Young, even dares to go as far as to state that “*Silas Crockett* is a better book than *Mary Peters*,” a sentiment that surely raised the ire of all those New York critics who, like Amy Loveman and Fanny Butcher, found the novel sentimental and less vivid and less detailed than Chase’s first Maine novel (17).

While *Mary Peters* deals with an individual woman and the way in which her memories protect her from time, chance, and tragedy, Chase takes the overriding theme of that novel and applies it to four generations of one family in *Silas Crockett*. The Crockett family, through the successive sharing of their collective memories and experiences, will also form minds and imaginations invulnerable against many of the same forces encountered by Mary Peters while Chase recreates “the story of Maine life upon the sea” (“Novels” 19). Although very little of the novel’s action actually occurs on the sea itself, the novel is an amalgamation and compilation of one family’s wisdom and recollections picked up while traversing the globe, brought home to the Maine coast, and passed down from one generation to another in the assurance that the all-important spirit of the past has the potential to work its wonders upon a reflective humanity. To Chase, as we know, such family rites and records were important, and just as her own life had been influenced by her own seafaring ancestors, she sought to show, as she did in *Mary Peters*, how the influence of the past had its place both in the present and in the future. The sparseness of plot and incident of which Chase speaks in her opening remarks to *Silas Crockett* gives the novel the feeling of a true family history, a work in which the characters, their thoughts and experiences, their faith, and their passionate love of home

and vocation are more important than and spiritually triumph over all those external forces of history which so often disrupt or complicate their lives. As Stanley Young states, *Silas Crockett*

goes far deeper in interpreting the heroism of the past and the stubborn passion of sea-going families than did ever *Mary Peters*. With this novel [Chase] imposes order and peace and serenity out of the materials of the past, and she does so without any tricks of style, without false moves or devices. She has the gift of understanding disciplined by the gift of selection (1).

Like the character of Mary Peters, the Crocketts are full of old places and old ideas, and thus, they carry their future, and the future of their State and nation, with them. Their devotion to the sea, their “heroism of the past” and their “stubborn passion,” define who and what they are and what they become through the succeeding generations. Though the external forces of time, change, and tragedy might beat about them, the Crocketts are able to stoically survive whatever is hurled at them, and they, like the character of Mary Peters, are able to do so with a hope and an optimism, the “order and peace and serenity . . . of the past,” that is, as Chase thought, the outstanding trait of a people once acquainted with a life larger in scope than any existing in most small, poverty-stricken, circumscribed Maine towns of the twentieth century.

Mary Ellen Chase’s view of this subject may be best summed up in her dedication of *Silas Crockett*. In this novel, one she calls “the most significant and the most valuable of all [her] books” (“Novels” 18), Chase wishes to pay tribute “to the seafaring families of Maine and to their descendants, who still retain within themselves the graciousness and dignity of their heritage” (v). For Mary Ellen Chase, this retention of graciousness

and dignity of heritage by Maine's seafaring descendants signified their ability to remember the past and to cope with devastating change, thus ensuring the survival of themselves and their heritage well into the future. To give greater perspective and definition to these beliefs, she says in her article for the *Portland Sunday Telegram* that

when I say in my dedication that these people still retain the graciousness and the dignity of their heritage, I mean that very thing. We do retain it, and I cannot believe that we shall lose it. Our State was made by pioneer stock who wrested a hard living from the soil and from the sea. They knew hard work, privations, and dangers—things which brought out the best within them, a best which cannot die so long as it is kept in admiration and in honor by this generation and by those to come ("Noble History").

Chase believed that despite the economic and social changes made along the Maine coast and the financial hardships imposed by the Great Depression, the descendants of Maine's seafarers still had the necessary stuff—the resiliency, the stamina, and the courage of their ancestors—to meet personal calamity and national catastrophe head on. Any study of the State's history, a history in which the cycles of economic boom and then bust were predominant features, she believed, would certainly prove her point. Maine, to be sure, had suffered from many economic recessions and depressions before the Great Depression struck in 1929. The collapse of the shipping industry in the mid-nineteenth century was just one of these many economic downturns, and as always, the State and its people, through the Yankee ethics of frugality, hard work, and faith, had made a way for material and spiritual recovery time and time again.

Chase, though, began to sense a change of pride and disposition within her fellow Mainers by the start of the 1930s that she found disturbing. As Perry Westbrook, writing

in 1965, says of Chase's growing perceptions in that period, "Once . . . she considered self-pity and indifference to be cardinal sins; now she [gave] first place to ease, the very hallmark of our culture" (160). While she thought her fellow Mainers still possessed the qualities necessary to survive during hard times, she was at the same time also concerned that many of these same people, most especially those descended from seafaring stock, were not living up to the full potential of their heritage. As the tourist industry made changes in and around her beautiful Blue Hill and the coastal people that she knew succumbed to the enticement of the easy money it provided, Chase was willing to say, as she did in *Mary Peters*, that "there was something immeasurably sad . . . in the sight of a grandson of a shipmaster in the foreign trade shingling the roof of a summer cottage for his livelihood" (185). And, through the retention of graciousness and dignity—through the retention of their memories and their traditions—Chase could not and would not allow the Crocketts, because of their inherent characteristics and traits, any such "easy out."

By dedicating *Silas Crockett* to Maine's sea-going families and their descendants, Mary Ellen Chase also makes an implicit connection between her own family and that of the Crocketts, which in other places she seems only too happy to disavow. In her "Foreword" to the novel, Chase, takes a stance she would repeat again in 1962, saying that "the characters . . . although typical of people whom I have known all my life, are drawn from no actual persons, living or dead" (ix). Comparing this statement with the ones made in her 1962 journal article, "My Novels About Maine," we may assume that the author most probably did not feel at liberty to discuss her familial connections to her characters for reasons of privacy and / or publication. She writes that

the characters in *Silas Crockett*, all purely fictional, are, I hope, typical of Maine coast men and women. I never knew them in the flesh; but I really know them better than if they had actually lived, as indeed, they *do* live for me. I chose the name Crockett as a grateful tribute to a certain Captain Crockett, who used to let me hold the wheel of his small steamboat, the *Catherine*, which during my childhood was on the run to Rockland where she connected with the Boston boats of the Eastern Steamship Lines (19).

Although it is quite clear that she has no intention of saying so, Chase's ancestors, as Robert Coffin points out in his review of *Silas Crockett*, have as much to do with her creation of this novel as they did in her construction of *Mary Peters*. The Maine depicted in each of these novels is, as Coffin says, "the Maine of her seafaring ancestors" (191). The only difference between the two novels is that the genealogical materials borrowed for *Silas Crockett* are, by their very nature, much more explicit and definitive than they are in *Mary Peters*. While it is certainly true that Chase did not actually know the people she incorporated into the novel "in the flesh," as they had died before her birth in 1887, she, for whatever reason, is once again hedging the truth when she leads the reader to believe that they never existed in a real or factual sense.

The Chase family, like other descendants of Maine sea-going families who struggled to survive the changes upon the coast between 1830 and 1930, had experienced, in one way or another, its own share of financial and social decline. Although an intelligent and educated man with a professional career, Chase's father never attained the same high financial or social status as did his father, Melatiah Chase, the well-respected captain of several wind-powered ships. Melatiah Chase, one in a long line of sea captains stretching back to early colonial times, became wealthy, like his ancestors before him, as

a result of his success in the foreign trade. During his lifetime, he was able to marry the most eligible young lady in town, buy one of the loveliest homes in Blue Hill Village, and educate his children in the finest schools and colleges New England at that time offered. In *A Goodly Heritage*, Chase writes,

I never knew my grandfather in the flesh. He died a year before my birth. But I knew him in his spirit which stared at me from his deepset eyes and his thin, much-lined face in my grandmother's room. I knew him, too, from the many stories of him which her fervent, cherishing nature did not allow us for one moment to forget (202).

This passage suggests that although Chase did not know her grandfather “in the flesh,” she felt that she did know him in the spirit—the spirit of the past that her grandmother, like the many good New England women she encountered during her childhood, best preserved in the oral tradition. As we will see, at least two of the main characters found within *Silas Crockett*—the elder Silas Crockett and his father-in-law, Thomas Winship—existed within the memories of the people she knew, and the oral family traditions she heard, as she explains in the *Portland Sunday Telegram*, served as a basis for her fiction. Long before Chase borrowed from these sources, manipulated the facts to suit her own artistic needs, and finally wrote the novel, her fictional characters had their own real life counterparts—men and women who lived and worked within a very short distance of her childhood home in Blue Hill. It is also important to note that the first two generations introduced in *Silas Crockett* are discussed largely from the point of view of a mother and a wife. Abigail (Shaw) Crockett, a woman who spends her life waiting for the men to return from the sea, has had ample opportunity for reflection, and she has lived long enough with the Crocketts to know what they are all about. She passes this information

along piecemeal to her daughter-in-law, Solace, who has experienced life upon the sea first hand and is later able to elaborate upon an “old play whose characters, costumes, and action, forgotten through the years, [might once again become] more familiar” (266). Through Solace, the remaining generations and the reader are given an informed and first-hand view of Maine’s maritime heritage. These two particular characters are Chase’s own literary and informational approximations of her grandmother, Eliza (Wescott) Chase, and her grandmother’s sea-going friends:

As I grew older and dreamed of writing books, I decided that sometime I would write of them and their finer, larger ways of life and thought. This I have tried to do in *Mary Peters* and *Silas Crockett* in grateful acknowledgment of what they taught me long ago in their homes that faced the sea (Chase, *A Goodly Fellowship* 23).

The background of the elder Silas Crockett, as Mary Ellen Chase describes it in the novel, most closely resembles that of Melatiah Chase. Silas, like her grandfather, hails from an impressive, prosperous, and well-known seafaring family, and the Christian names of his forebears are reminiscent of those found in the Chase genealogy. His great-grandfather, Judah Crockett, as one of the first sailors engaged in the American coastal trade, left Massachusetts to make his homeport in the newly-settled District of Maine; his grandfather, Amos Crockett, settled farther to the east in what eventually became Saturday Cove, fought against the British Navy during the American Revolution, took to far-reaching voyages, and returned home to build the most beautiful home in the tiny village; his father, James Crockett, fought against the British in the Revolution and the War of 1812, sailed ships both before and after those devastating conflicts, and spent his remaining years building ships which eventually made Saturday Cove known in every

major port around the world. In his own lifetime, James attended to his various business enterprises, while his wife, Abigail (Shaw) Crockett, the daughter of a prominent seafaring family in Salem, Massachusetts, used her independent bearing and intelligence to enlighten Saturday Cove, combating at her every turn the village's narrowness of thought and its predilection to Puritan superstition. Although the novel is set chronologically twenty years earlier than Captain Chase's own sea-going adventures, Silas also attains a captaincy by the age of twenty-three and marries a woman very much like Eliza Wescott. Solace Winship, a woman who initially feared the sea, willingly follows her husband to the ends of the earth, and in the process, accumulates a wisdom and point of view much larger than any to be found among the land-dwellers of Saturday Cove, Maine. She passes this knowledge on to her descendants after the early death of her husband. And while neither the Chases nor the Crocketts ever overtly cater to the summer people or take part in the tourist trade, Captain Melatiah Chase, during his middle age, just as the shipping industry began its steady decline, left the sea in 1861 because he could reasonably make much more money at other enterprises. For many years, he ran a general store at Blue Hill, owned and operated a lucrative granite quarry, and invested heavily in the construction and operation of steamboats along the Maine coast. Unfortunately, Silas Crockett is not nearly as resilient as Melatiah Chase in this respect. At the time of his death, his young son, Nicholas, realizes that

the sitting-room was still, but from upstairs he heard the creaking of his father's bed as he tossed about, and now and again the sound of his voice, not in protest against his mother's hands but against the war and steam and the loss of money and the ruin of the sailing ship. All the things which had worried his father most were now being made more plain than he had ever made them even in his most discouraged hours (173).

Even Solace, looking back at the dissolution of the sailing industry and the hard times that have followed hard on its heels, reluctantly admits to her grandson, Reuben, some twenty years after Silas' death, "I never thought I'd live to see the day when I was glad that your grandfather died a young man. He never could abide change" (260).

It is through the marriage of Silas Crockett to Solace Winship that Chase incurs her greatest artistic debt to both her paternal and maternal forebears. In terms of what each partner brings historically to the union, their marriage is not unlike that of her own parents. For Chase, her paternal lineage symbolized the seafaring life while her maternal lineage represented the efforts and ingenuity of the Yankee artisan. The marriage of Silas and Solace, like that of her own parents, Edward Everett Chase and Mabel (Lord) Chase, brings these two strong Maine traditions together. Each of these traditions, as Perry Westbrook asserts, are wholly dependent upon the other and give to New England two of its most distinctive features—a proud maritime history and a simple, but nevertheless, impressive architectural heritage and dignity. Writing of the Crockett-Winship union, he says that

when Silas returns in 1830 to Saturday Cove it is at the high-water mark of it and New England's maritime ascendancy, and therefore of the Crockett family's power and wealth. The year also marks a high point in Silas' personal life, for he has returned to marry Solace Winship. Solace is the daughter of an architect, Thomas Winship, who during his life designed fourteen meetinghouses, eighty-four dwelling houses, eighty-three vessels, and twelve schoolhouses. The marriage is almost an allegory. For if men like the impetuous, far-voyaging, amazingly vital Crocketts are responsible for the material wealth of the coast—the shipyards and the commerce—men like Thomas Winship, with a meditative and artistic bent, bring to its villages a beauty that persists generations after the

glory of the old merchant-adventurers has crumbled into dust (82).

Silas, through his own interests and those of his ancestors, is tied to the sea-going life where he accumulates a small fortune and is able to enjoy the best of everything while at home in Saturday Cove. This, of course, is evident in the Crockett home, an edifice, first commissioned to be built by his grandfather and later maintained by his father and then himself, which outshines all those clustered in the tiny village. Silas and his descendants take great pride in their old ancestral home, and they try to retain this outward evidence of their heritage even when poverty and ill-fortune have made such an effort not only improbable but impossible as well. Solace, whose father spent part of his life at sea, represents the knowledge and thrift brought back from the far voyages and incorporated in a physical, material sense into the homes and churches that make the New England region so unique. He, as the village designer and carpenter, is responsible for the planning, construction, and / or maintenance of the three most impressive buildings in Saturday Cove—the Winship home, Crockett home, and the town's new Congregational meetinghouse.

Within the marital union of Silas and Solace, and more importantly in the products of that union, namely their descendants, there exists a synthesis of those attributes that made New England, even in its decline, what it was in Chase's own life. As is evident in her autobiographies, Chase was proud to have descended from these two differing, but interrelated, branches of Maine tradition. From her loyalty to each of these traditions she drew an inspiration that gave her her greatest hope for the region's future—the courage of conviction on the one hand and the beauty and endurance of art on the

other. Chase's own life, as she realized early on in her writing career, was itself the synthesis of both of these two New England traditions. As she writes in *A Goodly Heritage*, "Such an inheritance, although in no sense rare among New Englanders is rightly cherished" (27). This New England inheritance is one that the Crocketts too—from the first Silas to the second—will revere and appreciate.

For the Crockett men, this courage of conviction is cherished and manifests itself in their willingness to follow the sea for three generations, even when it has become perfectly clear that their old means of livelihood is slowly fading and must be supplanted by some other vocation. Like Captain Peters and Mr. Gardiner in *Mary Peters*, the elder Silas cannot imagine ever leaving the sea and cannot possibly contemplate mastering anything but a sailing ship. In his return to Saturday Cove for his marriage in 1830, however, the inevitable has become increasingly apparent—steamships will one day be the monarchs of the sea. However, he is unwilling, either by practice or by tradition or by a combination of both, to recognize the changes that are about to undo the only world and life he has ever known. While he travels from Canton on his homeward journey aboard the *Southern Seas*, the sailing vessel that he has for two years mastered, he must book passage in Boston on a steamship in order to make the town pier of Saturday Cove in time for his wedding. It is on this final leg of his journey that the decline and final doom of the New England shipping industry is both prophesied and foreshadowed. In conversation with Captain Gilley, the commander of the *Island Maid*, a coastwise steamer, Silas learns that not all the world sees things exactly as he does. Captain Gilley tells him,

“Well, I don’t take overmuch stock in myself as a prophet, but I’m telling you to-night on my own deck that it’s coming, same as the last trump. I know you deep-water fellows think there’s nothing like over-crowded mast and fair winds, and I’m not saying that a ship before a good breeze ain’t the prettiest thing God and man put together. But what if there ain’t no winds? There’s the crux of the matter in a nutshell. What if there ain’t no winds? Sailing’s a matter of luck if you ask me, Captain Crockett, and if luck’s dead against you, what then? Haven’t I spent days in the doldrums myself? God, haven’t I? Haven’t I sat for days on end without so much steerage-way as a doughnut gets on a pan of hot grease? Haven’t I fidgeted and prayed and bit my nails all to no purpose? There’s days coming, young man, when the Atlantic Ocean to a steamer won’t look no bigger than Penobscot Bay to a ship with a wind dead against her or no wind at all. But I see plain enough you don’t believe it. And it’s a free land. Suit yourself, sir. You can leave my words as well as take ‘em” (12-13).

Silas, of course, leaves Captain Gilley’s prophetic words where he finds them, floating out across the wide, wide sea, which he thinks, in his youthful pride and self-assurance, will swallow them and the sentiments behind them. To him, this slovenly old man working in a new and relatively untried occupation represents the dissipation of everything that Maine’s “deep-water fellows” hold sacred and eternal. As long as the sea and the winds exist—erratic, unpredictable, and dangerous though they sometimes may be—men, like himself, will *sail* the seven seas. Silas, venting his ire at Captain Gilley’s predictions, quickly tells the old man, “‘I’m not alone in my views . . . All the best commanders I know look upon steam precisely as I do myself . . . we’ve history and experience behind us”” (13).

As a sea captain, Silas Crockett is a part of the New England aristocracy, and he feels that he must defend and justify his way of life—his history and his experience—to

others who may not understand it or who may be willing to ridicule it. Captain Gilley and the other passengers aboard the *Island Maid*, the narrator tells us, look

upon young Captain Crockett with no little obsequious admiration . . . for Silas was well worth looking upon in his six feet of health and strength. His spotless cravats and well-fitting clothes, his light kid gloves and Malacca-jointed cane, his sleek dark hair and perfectly trimmed side-whiskers, his air of eagerness and exuberance warranted respect and deference, and respect and deference they obtained. Moreover, his family was known in Isle au Haut as well as in Portland as a family which had for fifty years and more carried the name of Saturday Cove across the Pacific or around Good Hope to Canton and back through the perilous Sundra Straits to St. Helena, thence homeward to the shrewd shipowners of Cape Cod—men who were on the constant lookout for good masters and knew them when they saw them (10-11).

Silas Crockett is successful at what he does. He has good looks and fine clothes, wealth and power, respect and admiration, and in this heyday of Maine's maritime influence, he is a rather romantic character whose every word is both heeded and heralded by the general population. People worship him and what he stands for: sail cannot die, simply because Captain Crockett decrees that it will not die; foreign trade cannot be diminished, simply because Captain Crockett wills it otherwise. As his mother tells Solace after the two are married, Silas, like the other Crocketts before him, is a little larger than life; he has almost assumed the role of a god:

"Silas . . . hasn't changed a mite since he was in his cradle by this very fire. These Crocketts somehow don't change. It seems as though they were born with everything complete, all done up so to speak like a bundle. Silas never kept still a minute even when he was a baby. He hitched and twisted even when he was asleep. Amos Crockett, his grandfather, was just like all the rest and his uncles, too,—always scheming and planning and taking the world as their

own, never thinking anything could beat them . . . And the queer thing about it is the way they've always attracted luck just by expecting it round every corner. Look at Silas, now. He's got everything he wants just where he wants it. And you and I and all the rest of the world like nothing better than giving it to him" (85).

But, Captain Crockett, as he slowly finds throughout his lifetime, is not an omnipotent and omnipresent deity; he is not even a second-rate prophet, and by the end of his life, though he still clings to his old perceptions of history and experience, he cannot escape the changes that Captain Gilley first predicted in 1830. The winds of luck always expected by the Crockett men are now turning in another direction. Silas lives long enough to see the increased traffic of steamships on the high seas, and he also lives to see the changes in the American marketplace that will ultimately devalue the formerly lucrative foreign trade. He is harassed by both problems, and in his death scene, freed from his Yankee reserve by a high fever, he gives ample expression to his frustrations. But, when his nine-year old son, Nicholas, had asked him just five years earlier about the future of American shipping and whether or not he will ever be able to command a ship of his own, Captain Crockett, out of his history and experience, which have now become code words for his hurt pride and denial, tells the boy,

"A ship for a Crockett to sail? Well, I'm blessed! Yes there'll be a ship, my son, as long as there's an ocean, and don't you forget it. We're too good a race not to make ships and sail them, even though we sail in ballast half around the world!" (138).

Maine's shipping interests are already in a state of decline that will never allow Nicholas the sea-going perks and privileges that his forebears have enjoyed, even though, his father cannot bring himself to ever consciously admit the fact to himself or others.

When Nicholas graduates from Saturday Cove Academy in the spring of 1870, just six years after the death of his father, the Crockett name, although still revered in the old homeport, has begun to be forgotten in other parts of the world. He sadly realizes that he was born twenty years too late; the glory days of the New England clipper ship and of New England maritime ascendancy have gone beyond the point of returning. He muses that “time had wrought its changes and that other dark enemy, chance, which thus far he had not been able to withstand,” have conspired against him (177). But Nicholas, echoing the tenacious traditions of his forefathers, cannot imagine a circumscribed and landlocked life. He has two choices before him if he ever hopes to go to sea. He can either take an unglamorous job fishing for cod off the Maine coast, or he can secure a berth on one of the few clipper ships left “though [it may] sail in ballast half way round the world.” The descent of Maine’s maritime interests is now running swiftly to its ignominious end, and Nicholas finds that

there was little left of the old, far-seeing life which had embraced the world and brought it homeward. The yards and most of the docks had gone, building and piers alike. The long wharves upon which Nicholas had walked with his grandfather and his father little more than ten years before had been shortened by neglect and disuse. The sea was nearer the land than it had been. Already burdocks and rank grass were growing on the very spots where the yards had stood, spots marked by rusted and forlorn pieces of what machinery had been left as useless. Foreign ships came no longer to Saturday Cove. Nicholas could hardly remember when he had last felt a leap within him at the sight of square, sun-washed sails bursting upon the horizon. Square sails themselves were passing away to give larger place to the stout, schooner-rigged vessels that plied between coast ports north and south . . . The war and its tariffs, the building of railroads, the opening of the Great West, the perfection of the steamship, the competition of European shipyards—all these and more had at last dealt to

shipping under sail it death-blow. The master-builders of Maine and Massachusetts and Nova Scotia, 'reluctant to raise barnyard fowls once they had reared eagles,' were dropping off one by one; merchants who could make high percents by exploiting the new West were, wisely enough, turning their attention away from slow sailings in old ships. Maine, it is true, was to keep the American flag floating at the spanker gaff longer than any other state; and yet Maine men who still embraced the old life, taking the long eastern passages where sail with lower freights yet had its chance, were for the most part men of middle or later age and to whom little else was left to do. These would continue to sail until age had taken them from the seas. Silas Crockett would have been among them had chance not intervened; and had everything been different, Nicholas' early dreams might yet have come true in a measure. But, as things were, there was not much hope of their flowering. Decent berths to Canton and Calcutta were not easy to obtain even by the most ambitious of youths; wages were low and uncertain; and the men who now made up the crew of a sailing-ship were not of the stuff that had prevailed in the forties and the fifties when sailing was a gentleman's calling and when the best families in New England sent their sons before the mast (180-181).

Although Nicholas is certainly concerned about the poor state of Maine's shipping industry, and therefore, his immediate future, he still possesses and retains the Crockett belief in the sacredness and sanctity of their seaward calling. And while other sons of former sea captains are hurrying off to college and taking their places in the growing professional class, he is unable to think of another profession that would suit his background, his disposition, or his interests. He represents a generation that is, in a very real sense, caught between the world that once was and the one that now is. For Nicholas, his loyalty to a tradition, his courage of conviction to his family's time-honored way of life, wins out with little internal turmoil or conflict. To undertake any other course in life is to be untrue to everything he was raised to believe about himself, his

family, and their place in the world. Nicholas Crockett, knowing that Fate is surely against him and his desires, still eagerly takes his place with that of his father and his ancestors even though he recognizes that he “must soon bear a man’s portion in a world which at present favoured ill for his talents and desires” (183). As he tells Deborah while they are courting during that long summer following their high school graduation,

“I’d rather jig mackerel all my life . . . I’d rather do that than bump around back roads with a doctor’s kit and not know what to do for people. I’d rather freeze to death off the Banks than sit all my life at a lawyer’s desk. And schoolmastering’s no good, at least for me. I’m not much at books, you know that. But I know ships and a bit about navigation, and I’m going to try those examinations they’re giving in Portland in August. It might be even that I’d show I was better than an able seaman” (183).

Nicholas Crockett does prove himself a “better than able seaman.” The lessons learned from his father put him in high standing with the Portland examiners, and through sheer determination and perseverance, he wins the right to take his place on the *Mildred May*, a dilapidated clipper ship bound to points far, far from Saturday Cove. Although he feels himself lucky in this good fortune, Mary Ellen Chase is clearly delineating the changes that separates Nicholas’ generation from those that have immediately preceded him. The term “far voyage,” like the shipping industry itself, has changed a great deal in just one generation. To his father, “far” meant journeys through the Pacific and Indian Oceans to Shanghai, Canton, and Calcutta, then on to London and Liverpool, and finally back across the Atlantic to Maine; for Nicholas, “far” will mean monotonous, unchanging trips from Boston to San Francisco and back again by way of Cape Horn. While Nicholas’ father and grandfather dealt in silks, teas, precious woods, and fragrant spices,

he will transport purely functional commodities, wheat, livestock, and lumber, between these two American ports. And to further complicate his life and his wishes, the inroads of time and chance, the irreparable changes manifest all around him, will thwart any dreams he might have of ever commanding his own ship. At the age of twenty-three, the same age by which his father attained a captaincy and returned home wealthy enough to marry his mother, the younger Crockett is still working for low wages as a first mate. Nicholas soon realizes that, although he may continue in his loyalty to tradition, "one must adjust oneself to the exigencies and changes of time" (184).

Nicholas Crockett, like his father before him, is unable to truly adjust himself to these "exigencies and changes of time," although he feels for a time that he can and must. While it is true that he is able to accept the reduced stature of his calling—the lowering of wages, the reduction of respect and prestige accorded sailors, and the slow decline of his family's fortune, he, like his father in 1830, is unable to reconcile himself to the technological changes made upon the sea. Wind-powered ships are no longer being constructed in the United States, and, as Solace Crockett, greatly concerned over Nicholas' future, asks herself, "But if there was no sail, what was one to do?" (205). The answer to her question comes shortly before her son's tragic death in 1875. Nicholas is offered the command of a new pleasure-cruising steamship that will carry passengers from New York to Savannah and back again. The offer is lucrative, and the job, when compared to what he is used to aboard the *Mildred May*, is relatively easy. Recently married to Deborah, he earnestly contemplates the move, and when the *Mildred May* is destroyed off Bermuda in a storm, he comes very close to setting aside his convictions concerning steam-powered ships. His new wife, pregnant and fearful of their financial

future, wants him to take a job that will better provide for their new family. His mother, who readily admits that she “was all for sail herself as her life witnessed,” sees clearly that the old days are gone and are never returning, and she even comes to believe that he is “beating [his] head against a stone wall” and that his “stubborn determination . . . could not raise up sailing-ships” (204-205). But, Nicholas, from someplace deep within himself, cannot break with the traditions of the past; he

sat in his father’s chair by the fire . . . and listened to his mother and Deborah, holding off meanwhile the southern steamship lines although he knew well what he would say to them. He was standing with his back to the wall, fighting desperately against being overwhelmed. Time had beaten him and so had chance, which wrecked the *Mildred May* and brought him to the unwelcome notice of companies and courses which he despised. His only allies were a worn-out tradition and a cause already gloriously lost (205).

Nicholas, sitting in the same chair occupied by his father when he offered the young boy the assurance that there would always be ships for Crocketts to sail in, cannot and will not relent. Although he realizes that he is being impractical, that he is serving “a worn-out tradition and a cause already gloriously lost,” he cannot change the nature of his convictions. Although he loves the sea, he simply hates steamships and what they stand for almost as much as his father did forty-five years before. Nicholas turns down the steamship’s offer in order to accept work on a Searsport clipper ship as first mate. His decision, of course, causes the rift between him and his wife that will end in tragedy for all. Telling Deborah of his decision, he quickly sums up his position:

“ . . . there’s not much in commanding a thing you’ve no respect for. Everyone knows the ship I’m taking. She’s the best of those that are left. I’d rather sail on her as cook than to pilot a Morgan steamer through a Galveston swamp or carry fancy passengers from New York to Savannah . . .

I'll be proud to have a son of mine know I helped command such a [sailing] ship, and he'll be proud, too" (209).

Nicholas goes to the Grand Banks to escape Deborah's displeasure before he is due to take up his new post and never returns. This loss takes both a financial and an emotional toll on the two surviving Crocketts, and in the end, affects the family's ultimate future. The Crockett women, who are unable to make a living because of their now isolated location and the social standards of their community, have lost their one means of support—they must subsist upon the now dwindling and meager resources passed down from earlier generations. Solace, sadly, has lost her only son, the pride and joy of her life, and Deborah, out of guilt and recrimination, will never be able to bond with her unborn son. Both grandmother and grandson, left alone in the old Crockett home which is now falling swiftly into disrepair, will have to "make shift" if they are to survive in this changed and constantly changing world. The decline of shipping, and Nicholas' inability to truly adjust to the changes of the new world he finds himself in, eventually brings the entire family much lower economically and socially than it ever could have imagined at the time of his birth in 1850.

If Nicholas' world and options were greatly diminished by comparison to those of his father and ancestors, Reuben Crockett's will become smaller and more circumscribed still. For by the time he turns ten years of age, there are virtually no sailing ships left along the entire American coastline, and his grandmother finds herself thankful that "his future did not seem to burn so restlessly and yet so certainly within him" as did that of his father and grandfather (249). Because he has known neither his father nor his grandfather and their respective examples, he is spared the early allure of sailing ships and does not develop a burning desire to give his life to their now antiquated and

outdated way of life. But, Solace, knowing that Reuben must have a difficult time financially due to their impoverished state and that he must suffer emotionally as the sole son of a dead father and an absent mother, feels “strongly that the [family’s] past should be made clear to him before she [too] had to leave him” (249). As Reuben’s only connection to the past, she teaches the boy about the family’s larger, more prosperous life at sea and on land. It is his grandmother who realizes that “by connecting him daily with the Crockett past, [she] could pave the way for his [own] Crockett future” (249). Although she does not want Reuben to fall into the same difficulties experienced by his father, she feels that in order for him to succeed in life he must know what kind of hardy and resilient stock he hails from. The Crockett past—their loyalty to a now superceded tradition—is her intended bulwark against the havoc that the ravages of time, chance, and tragedy will undoubtedly cause Reuben in his own lifetime. During a conversation with his grandmother, after the two have been looking at the portraits of their sea-going ancestors hanging on the parlor wall, Reuben asks Solace, “I suppose I’ll go to sea, too, don’t you, grandmother?” (252). Solace’s response is, indeed, as telling as it is prophetic: “she felt herself then tempering the thought which she and Silas and all the others in the room had given him” by their example (252). She tells him, “Perhaps so . . . but perhaps not. There are many other things to do beside going to sea, Reuben” (252). Although Solace cannot change the fact that the Crocketts, herself included, desired nothing more than to go to sea in sailing ships of their own construction, she can influence this particular Crockett to appreciate the past without succumbing to any preconceived notions about what may or may not be expected of him in his lifetime. Loyalty to a tradition is a fine thing, but it is not etched upon stone tablets—it may, as

Mary Ellen Chase believed, take many, varying forms in the course of time. Solace hopes that Reuben will learn lessons from the Crockett past that will enrich his life, lessons that will prepare him for his life in the new century that is about to begin, lessons that will lead him to other, more reliable occupations. Her message does not go completely unheeded or unnoticed; the young Reuben quickly realizes that

“There probably won’t be sailing-ships when I’m old enough to go. But I might command a steamship and sail across the Atlantic Ocean and other oceans as well. Then I’d see the places I study about. I’d like to see all the places, grandmother, that you and my grandfather saw” (252).

By the time Reuben has graduated high school, however, the Crockett future looks quite bleak and rather hopeless. Solace has died, and the family fortune has been completely used up in the years since his father’s death. Reuben must make his own way in a world that is drastically different from any that his ancestors ever knew. He, like his father before him, is not content with a schoolmaster’s life; he dislikes schoolwork and studying. College, therefore, is certainly not in his future, for even if he had the desire to continue his education, the money for tuition and expenses simply does not exist. The fishing industry, although flourishing at the time of his birth, has dropped off due to competition from the fisheries of the Great Lakes and the Pacific Northwest. The tourist industry, which by 1890 is shifting into high gear, disturbs him greatly. Money may be easily made caring for the estates of the wealthy summer people who are buying up shorefront property in Saturday Cove, but Reuben, a shy and retiring young man, hates the idea of invading, unknown outsiders occupying old homes that he feels they do not really appreciate and are certainly not entitled to. He detests their willingness to forever

change the look and feel of the old Maine coast. And more importantly, Reuben, at age nineteen,

kept his mind busy on this possibility and that. There were few enough for him, and he knew it, knowing full well what manner of young man he was and how certain things were well-rooted within him for better or for worse . . .

Reuben had no illusions about himself . . . he knew far more about his own nature and worth than most men know at forty. He understood that he would never be a man to whom persons are unmistakably drawn, a man who succeed in whatever he undertakes by mere force of personality and an abundance of social gifts. He knew, for instance, that he could never sell things, either leaning across the counter of some city or even country store or going about from town to town with samples of cotton good, clothing, boots and shoes in huge case, which he sometimes saw in the small mercantile houses of Saturday Cove . . . Education meant money, which was scarce enough in most families, even the best, now that the old life had gone, whereas at one's very doors was the ever-growing demand for carpenters and masons and paper-hangers to build and put in order the summer home which were rising year by year. To learn a trade now meant good wages after the shortest of apprenticeships; and yet a stubborn pride within Reuben set summarily aside the notion . . . He could not, he thought, without apology come up his driveway to his white doors with a tool-kit on his shoulders or stand in white canvas trousers, daubed with paint and oil and varnish, before [the portraits of] Amos and Judah in the front parlor. He came of better stuff, he said to himself with a proud lift of his head . . . And steadily as the summer days went on and the autumn loomed ominously before him, the knowledge became clearer to him that his work like that of his forbears must be with the sea and with some sort of ship that moved thereon (288-290).

Reuben, with only one option open to his "stubborn pride," finally signs on with a steamboat company that plies the waters off the Maine coast. By working for the Eastern Steamship Line, he will be able to maintain his old home in Saturday Cove, marry

Huldah Barrett, father a son, and still make a living upon the sea, at least carrying on in some small way, the traditions of his forebears. He works his way up from the bottom—going from a lowly clerk to first mate, where he learns about steamboat navigation, to captain of his own ship in one short decade. In a little less than seventy years, the Crockett family has gone from decrying and detesting the use of steam on the seas to making their living upon its back. But, the economic cycles of boom and bust are becoming shorter and tighter in their revolutions. While the decline of sail took the better part of two generations to run its course, the rise and fall of the American steamship lines will occur within Reuben's own working lifetime. The advent and perfection of automobiles and the extension of the railroads to seaside communities render coastal steamships obsolete by the late 1920s—and, Reuben Crockett, by the age of fifty-five, has become an unemployed and displaced worker. He is then forced to take the job of a ferryman for much lower wages and in a place far removed from his beloved home in Saturday Cove—signifying, in a material sense, the family's lowest point to date.

In this depiction of the Crockett family between 1830 and 1933, Mary Ellen Chase examines these three men, Silas, Nicholas, and Reuben, and the nature of their convictions. Are their convictions respectable and well founded? Or, are they based upon a simple fear of change? These two questions are central to Chase's Humanistic point of view within *Silas Crockett*, what Perry Westbrook calls her abiding "faith . . . in the durability of a tradition." (27). As Virginia Barstow sees the situation, Chase seems to say that the

weakening of tradition does not bring with it the weakening of character. The Crockett family has declined if we measure success by wealth and glory. The . . . Crockett

men described are all ambitious, but time is not suitable for some. Perhaps the one weakness of the later ones was their [willingness to cling] to a dying tradition. But, like the Peters family, they were “playing a losing game for the glory and fun of it.” They [Silas, Nicholas, and Reuben] had ideals to live up to . . . James Crockett and those who came before him, and they clung to [their ideals] tenaciously as long as there was the slightest resemblance between their occupations and that of the first Crocketts. Whether [or not] those [earlier] Crocketts would have been much different from their descendants had they been born after 1850 is a question we cannot answer but which we must keep in mind if we are tempted to consider the story . . . as a story of the degeneration of a family (59-60).

While the Crockett family has certainly declined in terms of “wealth and glory,” as Barstow asserts, their convictions mean more to them than the mere “playing [of] a losing game [just] for the glory and fun of it.” Their convictions concerning the sea and the sea-going life are, indeed, both respectable and well founded. Through the Crocketts, Chase makes a point that Barstow apparently does not completely recognize or understand: true, there is no “weakening of character,” but there is no “weakening of tradition,” and certainly no “dying tradition” when it comes to this particular New England social history. As Robert P. T. Coffin says, *Silas Crockett* is Chase’s “ history of a culture,” a culture, we should always remember, that was her own. Chase’s other writings, replete with information about her ancestors’ seafaring life and its foregoing gifts, are, if nothing else, ample evidence that a culture does not simply disintegrate in a generation or two and then vanish into oblivion just because one particular occupation or way of life succumbs to economic changes and pressures. Culture, and the traditions it embodies, can endure forever. Chase’s own grandfather, as we know, was the owner and commander of sailing-ships, and when the times changed and sailing was no longer a lucrative

enterprise, he turned to other occupations. His involvement with these other occupations did not, in any way, diminish the importance of his family's sea-going traditions or his descendants' ability to appreciate the gifts inherited from their sea-going ancestors. A tradition, as a thing of imperishable value, can never be weakened and can never die, although, as Chase says in her defense of *Silas Crockett*, it may assume other forms in the course of time.

For the Crockett family, their loyalty to tradition, although it seems somewhat old-fashioned, worn-out, and detrimental by the time of Nicholas' death, is neither weakened nor dead just because sailing-ships have become a thing of the past; their love of the sea continues to define their place, and the place of their descendants, within the larger contexts of humanity and history. Writing of her own seafaring tradition in *A Goodly Heritage*, Chase says that "Such a possession will remain invincible armour against the new prosperity [(i.e. the tourist industry)] of the coast as long as such an inheritance is nurtured and cherished" (216). In other words, she viewed tradition, and the imperishable values behind it, as a protection against the ravages of time, chance, and tragedy as long as people remembered it and found ways to incorporate it into their daily lives.

We cannot say that the members of Crockett family do not remember their traditions, for they clearly do, and we cannot say that they do not try to incorporate these traditions into their forgoing lives, for they seek to go to sea even after sailing-ships have become obsolete. For, as Virginia Barstow rightly states, "they clung to [their ideals] tenaciously as long as there was the slightest resemblance between their occupations and that of the first Crocketts." Silas and Nicholas, we know, loved the sea, and they wanted

to engage the sea in their own, time-tested way—by sailing clipper ships around the world. Their struggle against change—another of Chase’s words for the ravages of time, chance, and tragedy—is, in itself, a tradition as old as humankind’s struggle against the sea. The sea, in a sense, becomes a strong metaphor for the economic and social changes found within the lives of each of these two men. Through the constant ebbing and flowing of the tides, the unpredictability of the wind and weather, the Crocketts, from Judah on down to Nicholas, have proudly earned their bread upon the beautiful, though often fickle and dangerous, sea. Silas and Nicholas continue to believe in the supremacy of sail even though the impetuous seas—the economic storms, downward cycles, and technological advances of their times—have become rough and perilous and have made such a feat increasingly difficult and costly. People, Chase seems to say through these two collective generations, do not like change, they will fight against it at every turn, holding on to their old ideas and ways of life long after time and circumstance have made these ideas and ways of life difficult to hold on to. But, each of these characters, in his own way and in his own time, does hold on. Silas sails until death ends his career, and Nicholas, although he finds it difficult to find employment on a clipper ship, does the same. Change, whether it is liked or not, is the one force that can always be expected—time, chance, and tragedy are the forces that are the most difficult to control and to protect one’s self from. But, change cannot harm people when they are armed, like the Crocketts, with imperishable values—for imperishable values are, as Chase believed, eternal and impervious to change.

For the Crocketts, their loyalty to a tradition, in this case their love of sailing-ships as opposed to steamships, is only an outward manifestation of the other, deeper

spiritual values at work within their lives. While they sailed their ships, they exhibited a willingness to work hard, to pit themselves against the forces of nature, to explore the unknown, to have pride in one's vocation and calling, to live a full life without fear or regret, and to educate themselves about the larger world. These attitudes—these imperishable values of their culture—were not destroyed by change for they are the inherent traits and characteristics handed down to them from the earlier members of the Crockett family. Their love of sailing-ships, whether they realize it or not, serves only as the tangible means by which they have been allowed them to develop their broad-minded attitudes. With the passing of these ships into oblivion, it is not strange then that Silas and his son do develop a certain fear that their culture is under attack and may be lost or forgotten. This helps to explain Silas' frustrations and alarm at the time of his death, and it also helps to explain Nicholas' unwillingness to command a ship that he has no respect for. Both men want to do something with their lives that their descendants may look to with pride and not with embarrassment or regret. Their fear of change, although a typical human response, Chase says, is truly ungrounded, for "The past of Maine, [its culture and traditions] is not dead nor can it ever die so long as . . . [they and their descendants] preserve it in [their] thoughts and lives" ("Noble History").

Reuben Crockett is the first member of his family to recognize and accept this particular truth. He too loves the sea, and he also loves the example set by his ancestors. Through his grandmother's memories and stories, he learns about his clipper-ship heritage, and he certainly finds another way to incorporate these seafaring traditions into his everyday life—in his case, exercising the other, deeper imperishable values while working aboard a steamship. Although he is born poor and will become poorer still as

his life continues, Reuben finds himself rich in this possession of imperishable values. These values will protect him and his family as they must part with their own particular means of livelihood, their heirlooms, and eventually, their ancestral home in Saturday Cove. He becomes the first Crockett to accept the changes he finds around him without a sense of fear or foreboding, for

now that he had settled the beginning of his future Reuben brought to his work the same trustworthiness and reliability that had characterized him [and his family] from the start . . . He was not without his ambitions and his dreams . . . He took pleasure in the very fact that he was helping to carry passengers who represented a larger life than he knew, men and women who had seen more of the world than he, boys who sometimes in city accents asked him questions as to this light and that island along their desultory course . . . He grew acquainted with the coast both in terms of navigation and of interest in its very loveliness . . . he smoked his pipe . . . and wondered if Java Head and the peaks beyond Rio and even the harbour of Sydney, which his father had seen [as a child], were actually more beautiful than the tumbling Mount Desert hills rising darkly into the evening sky of growing blue as the dawn broke behind them (291-292).

He realizes, like Mary Peters, that “the broad-backed sea [is] the dispenser of many gifts,” (Chase, *Mary Peters* 377), but he is also a part of a new generation wise enough, as Chase writes in her conclusion to *A Goodly Heritage*, to “seize upon whatsoever things are here and now of good report . . . cultivating meanwhile from the gifts tendered [from the past] . . . a merry relinquishment as well as a larger understanding” (298). He will command steamships, bringing to that enterprise a larger understanding that the energy and vitality that have characterized his family from the start cannot be lost or misplaced. For Reuben and his son, the second Silas, these gifts tendered from the past are the

imperishable values and traditions that change cannot thwart—fortitude, hard work, faith, courage, and perseverance.

If Chase's development of the Crockett family saga is based upon her paternal ancestors' maritime interests, the characterization of the Winship family is based soundly upon her maternal forbears, the Lord family, who represented to her the ingenuity of New England artists and craftspeople. Thomas Winship, the father of Solace (Winship) Crockett, is, quite simply, Chase's literary resurrection of her maternal great-great uncle, Thomas M. Lord, the noted architect and carpenter of nineteenth-century Blue Hill. In her creation of Thomas Winship, Mary Ellen Chase lifts, with little explanation or explication, from the Lord family's genealogy, even though she is again obviously hesitant to give credit where credit is truly due in her article, "My Novels About Maine." She does, however, write in her Foreword to *Silas Crockett* that she is "deeply indebted . . . to Miss Florence Morse of Blue Hill for certain original plans of Maine meeting-houses and for other interesting family papers of which [she has] made use" in the novel's construction (ix). Chase's explanation ends there, though, and she never mentions Thomas Lord's name in connection to her research for the novel. Perry Westbrook writes only that "some of [Chase's] material, such as that on Maine meeting houses, came from her Maine coast friends" (80).

Although we have no reason to doubt the friendliness of Chase's relationship with Florence Morse, Westbrook fails to mention that Chase shared a common bloodline with Morse—the two women were, by a quick reckoning of their pedigree, fourth cousins. Florence Morse was Thomas Lord's granddaughter, the child of Sarah Cole (Lord) Morse, and her husband, James Henry Morse. Chase, through her mother, as we know,

was the direct descendant of Thomas Lord's younger brother, Heard Lord. By the time of Chase's birth, though, Thomas Lord had been dead nearly seven years, and any knowledge she might have had of him or his handiwork certainly would not have been first hand. As with her grandfather, Chase would have first learned about Thomas Lord and his work through certain women, like Morse, who were Lord's relatives and lived within walking distance of her childhood home.

During Chase's childhood, Florence Morse's family lived in one-half of the Thomas Lord home, while Thomas Lord's widow, Matilda, their son, Roscoe Granville Lord, and his wife, Caroline (MacFarland) Lord, occupied the other apartment. Chase, herself, was raised in a beautiful, rambling federal-style home just two doors away that, according to records in possession of the Morse family, was also designed and built by Lord in or about 1842 (Green 5). As we know from her autobiographical works, Chase was well acquainted with Lord's family—both with his daughter, Sarah "Aunt Sa" Morse, and with his daughter-in-law, Caroline "Aunt Cad" (MacFarland) Lord. When writing of Caroline Lord in *A Goodly Heritage*, Chase mentions the woman's "gracious house with beautiful carvings over its inside doors and stately pillars without," perhaps indicating that she knew something about Lord and that she appreciated his contributions to the physical beauty of her Blue Hill neighborhood (95). These beautiful carvings were in the form of a rosette with leaves and tendrils—a signature feature that Thomas Lord incorporated into many of the buildings that he designed or built. Given this evidence and the affectionate and long-standing nature of these two relationships, it seems rather apparent that Chase, through her two "aunts," would have known who Thomas Lord was

and would have certainly understood her family's connection to him even though she "never knew [him] in the flesh."

The materials Chase borrowed from Florence Morse are incorporated almost exactly as they are found in Thomas Lord's personal diary. In the novel, Thomas Winship, with the help of his daughter, Solace, compiles a list of buildings he designed and built during his long career shortly before he dies in 1860. This record is as follows:

Thomas Winship began his joiner work in May of the year 1807 in the counties of Hancock and Washington in the then State of Massachusetts. He designed and built in all fourteen meeting-houses without assistance in planning by any save himself and what he has read and seen with his own eyes. Of these he has made separate record for whoever may follow him.

In addition he has worked as superintendent and laborer alike on

- 84 dwelling-houses
- 83 vessels of various builds
- 12 school-houses
- 18 barns and sheds
- 12 vessel heads
- 5 stores
- 14 taverns

He has made besides in thirty years 197 coffins with burial boxes to match at the cost of \$2.50 each.

This work has been done in fourteen different towns and villages.

The account of each job together with time, cost, and profit, will be found truly described on the following pages (81-82).

To this list, Chase attaches a footnote by way of explanation: “These figures are accurately given from the diary of a Maine village joiner and builder of this period” (82).

Thomas Lord’s own rendering of the work performed during his lifetime reads:

Began at my trade May 10, 1828. Have worked on 83 vessels, more or less—84 dwelling houses; 12 school houses; 14 meeting houses and other public buildings; 15 barns and sheds; 10 stern mouldings and heads; 250 coffins, and 5 stores besides sashes and blinds and other work. It’s a work of fifty-two years. 10th of May 1880 (Green 5).

The comparison of these two lists, although there are slight discrepancies both in terms of the lesser works performed and the dates when each man began his career, make it clear that Chase was, indeed, borrowing from Thomas Lord’s life in her creation of Thomas Winship’s character. This fact is further substantiated by the research of Professor Stanley M. Green, an authority on nineteenth-century New England architecture and Thomas Lord’s first biographer. In an article originally prepared for the October, 1947 edition of the *Magazine of Art* and reprinted in pamphlet form by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission forty years later, Professor Green states that

down the Maine coast, east of Penobscot Bay, lies the little sea-faring village of Blue Hill. Its houses cluster around a narrow harbor and are scattered up the side of the abrupt, spruce-covered hill from which the town derives its name. Here during the middle years of the last century lived Thomas Lord, carpenter and joiner, who could turn his hand to anything from a church to a coffin. His simple craftsman’s life suggested the figure of Thomas Winship in Mary Ellen Chase’s novel of her native Blue Hill, *Silas Crockett*; and Talbot Hamlin in his *Greek Revival Architecture in America* mentions his work with appreciation. But the documents in the possession of the descendants of Lord have not till now been studied in reference to the buildings themselves. They consist of

diaries and lists owned by Miss Florence Morse of Blue Hill, a granddaughter of Lord . . . These documents are invaluable, for they reveal Lord as one of the few known personalities among the host of usually anonymous carpenter-builders whose work lends so much flavor to the New England scene (1).

Green's last statement that Lord's personal papers "reveal . . . one of the few known personalities among the host of usually anonymous carpenter-builders whose work lends so much flavor to the New England scene," resonates Chase's own artistic intent in *Silas Crockett*. In her construction of Thomas Winship's character, Chase not only pays homage to her maternal heritage, but she also speaks of the endurance of another New England tradition—art. Like the character of Mary Peters, the Crocketts appreciate the physical beauty of their hometown while they retain the memories of their sea-faring life. In art, regardless of the medium, these two ideals become fused. Mary Peters pondered over her early life and created rag rugs depicting scenes of her childhood, trying to put all of her personal experiences into some kind of greater spiritual perspective; the Crocketts, although not artisans themselves, do much the same. Through the influence of their maternal ancestor, they come to appreciate the fact that his architecture and carpentry serve as enduring testaments to the beauty encountered and brought home during their seafaring life. The money earned in that industry gave the earlier villagers the financial wherewithal to create edifices that exemplified their larger, more prosperous life and the imperishable values that that particular life represented. During her own life, Chase found that "in the great white houses of Searsport and Damariscotta, Belfast and Wiscasset, Bucksport and Blue Hill there still lingers something of that . . . enlightened heritage of those days when provincial minds met the larger, outer world across the seas" (*Heritage* 216).

Thomas Winship, like his real life counterpart, Thomas Lord, spent his early years at sea, bringing him into close contact with distant lands, foreign people, and their customs of design and carpentry which later influenced his distinctive New England architecture. To reiterate a point made by Perry Westbrook, *Silas Crockett* is as much a story of Yankee craftsmanship as it is Yankee seamanship, for if, as he says, “men like the impetuous, far-voyaging, amazingly vital Crocketts are responsible for the material wealth of the coast—the shipyards and the commerce—men like Thomas Winship, with a meditative and artistic bent, bring to [New England] villages a beauty that persists generations after the glory of the old merchant adventures has crumbled into dust” (82). Long after the Crocketts—James and Abigail, Silas and Solace, Nicholas and Deborah—have died and taken their respective places in the family burial grounds, long after their beloved clipper ships have disappeared from the seas, long after their family’s sea-going fortune is spent and their heirlooms have been sold, Thomas Winship’s buildings are still standing proudly in the village of his birth. And while his Crockett descendants, Solace, Reuben and the second Silas, are not able to retain personal possession of these buildings, they continue to be grateful for what they represent—the permanence and continuity of their traditions.

Saturday Cove’s three most impressive and important buildings—the Congregational meetinghouse, the Winship home that Thomas built for his wife, Dorcas, shortly after they were married, and the Crockett home—all offer ample evidence that art, as another imperishable New England value or tradition, can go on touching lives and inspiring people long after the artist and his inspiration have departed the scene. Each of these buildings is, in its own way, central to the novel’s setting and symbolizes the

Crockett family's physical and spiritual connections to their earlier traditions. In a tumultuous century that is marked, for the most part, by financial decline within the family and personal adjustments contingent on that decline, these three buildings remind them, as John Iorio rightly states, that a healthy love and reverence for "heritage and tradition" can give humankind "'the everlasting triumph over time and chance'" (29).

On the physical and material level, Thomas Winship's buildings—his 84 dwelling houses, 12 schoolhouses, and 14 churches—although beautiful both within and without, are purely functional constructions; they meet the everyday needs of the people for which they were designed and constructed. The Crocketts, like all their fellows in Saturday Cove and along the Maine coast, live in them, are educated in them, and worship in them. There is nothing spectacular or amazing in this fact, for in a collective sense, the Crocketts are no different than hundreds of other New England families in hundreds of other New England villages, who "retain . . . the [material] graciousness and the dignity of their heritage." But, to the Crocketts, there is a spiritual dimension in the graciousness and dignity of these buildings that the passing of the decades does not and cannot diminish. Thomas Winship, as their ancestor, has imbued his buildings with a lasting importance that he does not clearly recognize in his own lifetime. As he and Solace compile an accurate catalog of his career, he tells his daughter,

"I don't know that all this is of much account to anybody but me, but I'd like to set down a record of what I've done in my life. It's not much, perhaps, but I did it, and I've not let much grass grow under my feet since I left the sea at thirty years. When a man's nearly sixty and more than half his working life has gone, he likes to take stock of things he's done. These big sheets I've got together here are the plans of the meeting-houses I've drawn and put up. There are fourteen in all, and not one of them had any other architect but me. I'm laying them away in a safe place for

what they're worth. Maybe somebody will see them some day, but if they don't, I'll be neither the better nor the worse for it" (80).

Although the old man may not recognize the importance of his artistic contributions, his Crockett descendants clearly do. They recognize within his works and within his life their own desire for some kind of physical, material evidence of a permanence, "the everlasting triumph" of their traditions, in a world riddled with change and mutability. His work provides them with this evidence, for as Chase, writing in 1961 of her native Blue Hill and her own appreciation of art, concludes "art [is] symbolic not only of the material needs of mankind, but of its Spirit as well" (Chase, "Pottery"). Winship's buildings, like Mary Peters' rugs, are sacred expressions which, although personal, are rooted in a common human past. Her father's art, as Solace (Winship) Crockett realizes in her old age, is "itself a memorial of the days when men like her father laboured with faith and devotion for the very sake of labour" (263). In her mind, his art possesses the potential that would "perhaps halt time now and then, turn it backward upon itself, [and] make those who looked upon [it], if only for a moment, [see] the sacredness of tradition, the long dependence of the present upon the past" (263). Chase, making this connection in a personal way, states that

the village of Blue Hill, Maine, will in the year 1962 celebrate proudly its two hundred years of quiet, yet productive life. Settled by men and women from Newburyport, Salem, and Andover, who came in their small vessels to build both lumber mills for livelihood and gracious homes in which to live, it became in the early nineteenth century a town of shipbuilding and of shipmasters, who sailed their home built barques and brigs to far seas. Those sea-faring days, as in other Maine coast villages, are long since past; and yet in Blue Hill, unlike many other places of its size, their gracious legacies of care and skill, line and form, are still at work through the hands

and imaginations of villagers, who do not forget their ancestors (Chase, “Pottery”).

For the later Crocketts, as a people “who do not forget their ancestors,” Thomas Winship’s art becomes more important as the sea-faring life passes farther beyond recall, and modern problems—unemployment, poverty, and the Great Depression—become defining elements in their lives. For Reuben and his son, the second Silas, there is something in Winship’s art that suggests a life outside of Saturday Cove, the State of Maine, and their troubling present as well. Art, like all goodly traditions, transcends their own time, town, and trouble. It gives to all those who look upon it and appreciate it a feeling of spiritual security that comes from a personal connection to the past and creates a lasting hope in the future of humanity. Thomas Winship is one in a long line of artists stretching back across the centuries, and his art, as Chase would later write, is “like all art, an outward and visible sign of that inward and spiritual grace which, through the hands of men, redeems our troubled times and makes us suddenly conscious that symmetry and beauty still remain among us and suggest forevermore the values by which we live” (Chase “Pottery”). Solace, as the keeper of the family’s artistic legacy—her father’s diary, account books, building plans, and two of the homes he either built or collaborated on—comes to realize the eternal truth of this statement. She recognizes that through “all the nails driven by [her father’s] own careful hands or by those of other whom he had trained and watched, all the boards sawn, all the joists hoisted into place, all the bits of carving with which he had embellished their own and other homes” he too has suggested eternal values by which he and his descendants may live (82). Through her marriage to the elder Silas, Thomas Winship’s life and art, “the gracious legacies of care and skill, line and form . . . still at work,” are permanently a part of the same Crockett

past that she thought, in Reuben's boyhood, could pave the way for a better, stronger Crockett future.

Of the three Winship buildings in Saturday Cove, the first to be mentioned is the new Congregational meetinghouse, constructed just prior to the novel's beginning in June 1830. As the spiritual center of the town, it enjoys a conspicuous place on a high hill overlooking the sea and the village cemetery. This new building replaces an earlier meetinghouse that, as Abigail Crockett tells us at the novel's outset, burned to ground two years before. Here, Chase again incorporates details from Thomas Lord's life and the history of Blue Hill; he was in charge of building the Blue Hill Congregational Church in 1843 after an earlier church, built during in the 1790s, was destroyed by fire on January 2, 1842 (Candage, 74). Silas Crockett, on his way to the Crockett home with his mother after his arrival back in Saturday Cove for his wedding, pauses to look at the new building in which he and Solace, Nicholas and Deborah, and Reuben and Huldah, will eventually all exchange their wedding vows and in which their respective sons will all be christened. They, symbolically enough, will also be buried beneath its shadow. He finds that

the meeting-house was beautiful. Like many of its date along the coast it had been designed and constructed by a local builder, in its own case by Solace's father Thomas Winship. A ship's carpenter for twenty years of his life, he left the sea to satisfy his passion for building, and a dozen or more of the white clapboarded and red-brick houses of Saturday Cove owed their gracious dignity to his imagination and stubby pencil. Into his work he had wrought details of the buildings he had seen throughout the world, Greek temples, English cathedrals, Georgian mansions, Roman columns and porticoes, so that his new white church, looking seaward from Saturday Cove, bore evidence of an assimilation common to a hundred other rural builders along the coast of Maine. Maine pine trees

had formed the four Doric columns which gave entrance to its wide porch; Maine spruce had shaped its tapering spire into almost the exact semblance of a certain English cathedral spire which he had once spent hours drawing after an eager journey by coach while his ship lay in Southampton Water; the notched inner edges of its wide, triangular pediment were reminiscent of the decorative art of churches in Normandy and Aquitaine; and the high, severe, many-paned windows on either side of its paneled doors beyond their grooved pilasters suggested Old England as well as New. In it Sir Christopher Wren lived again, Samuel McIntyre, Charles Bullfinch, and other builders now nameless whose homes and churches and public buildings Thomas Winship had studied with an eye to shrewd and reverent emulation. For the New England meetinghouse in its best and noblest form is an incorporation, a unification, a synthesis of the art and architecture of many centuries, many lands, and many peoples (28-29).

Silas Crockett's reaction to the dignity and gracefulness of the new church is one of the few things he and his heirs will encounter in their lives that do not come under the attack of change. The building, because Winship has emulated the past masters, has a permanence rooted in the past that will survive long after their seafaring name has lost its magic and their sailing-ships are no more. As Silas' trade and vocation are diminished in importance and the Crockett coffers suffer with the passing of the generations, Thomas Winship's church building will continue to symbolize the progressive Protestant ideals of the family—the order, the decorum, and the spiritual beauty that may be found in a broad and simplistic faith. Its very lines, the way in which it is both designed and put together, are, as Chase herself says, an “outward and visible sign” of the artist's, and therefore his family's, “inward and spiritual grace,” suggesting forever the values by which they all have lived (Chase, “Pottery”).

The Puritan values of nineteenth-century Saturday Cove, Maine are no less stringent than the Puritan values of nineteenth-century Blue Hill. Conversion to the Congregational faith is expected, and the Christian rules of faith and practice come from a strict and literal interpretation of the King James Bible. There is no deviation from proscribed norms, and virtually no independence of religious thought or opinion is tolerated. The Congregational Church, as a body politic and a body spiritual, is a force that each Crockett must contend with in his or her own time. Old-time revival services are frequent; ministerial injunctions and disciplines are meted out in abundance. The church's early pastor, the Reverend Ethan Fisher, setting the religious tone of the community in the time of Abigail and Solace Crockett, inserts himself and his authority into spiritual matters of so little consequence that even the most upright and pure of his parishioners are put off by his rigorous righteousness. But, the Crocketts, most especially the Crockett women—Abigail, Solace, and finally, Huldah—as members of an old sea-going, and therefore an enlightened family, pay little heed to the orthodoxy represented by Mr. Fisher and the men who follow him into the Saturday Cove pulpit. Each of these three Crockett women possess a reverential fear of God, but like Chase herself, they are put off by what Westbrook calls the “rigidity, dogmatism, and excessive zeal” in all matters religious. Like Sarah and Mary Peters, they have, through the pervading influence of the sea-going life, tempered their Puritan faith with other spiritual ideals and have blessed their isolated community with much needed spiritual leaven. Their faith, as represented by Thomas Winship's new meetinghouse, is, in itself, an artful “assimilation,” a “reverent emulation,” an “incorporation,” a “unification,” and a “synthesis” of many varying thoughts and points of view acquired upon the far voyages

away from New England influences. And although they do not totally forsake their Puritan heritage or its language, they create a pure and simple faith that is based more upon the spiritual needs of humanity than upon satisfying the jealousies and vagaries of a vengeful and dictatorial Creator. Their religion, simply put, is the religion of Humanism: “a set of values or principles that rest on the conviction that mind and spirit supersede matter, render man unique on earth, and make him the ultimate master of his destiny” (Westbrook 158). These three women are, as Westbrook further explains, “moral beings in that they have the power of choice between good and evil actions—a power which liberates them from the prison of matter” (158).

Abigail (Shaw) Crockett, the first of the three Crockett women introduced in the novel, is a religious renegade and rabble-rouser of great bearing and intelligence. A native of Salem, Massachusetts, she fights against the Puritan superstitions and male-dominated authority, feels that a century before her birth would have been considered crimes approaching that of witchcraft and would have been punishable by death on the gallows of her old hometown. She is independent and outspoken. Her knowledge of the world and humankind’s place in that world comes from a gift of keen observation that is both extended and strengthened by the seafaring life and her extensive reading. She is, as Perry Westbrook asserts, a woman given to reflection while “waiting for various relatives to return from their voyages—first her father and brothers, then her husband and sons” (81).

When we first meet her, Abigail has been waiting two years for her oldest son, Silas, to return from the sea. She has, in the ten years just prior to the novel’s beginning, lost two sons to the sea, and she is apprehensive for Silas’ safe return for his proposed

marriage to Solace Winship. Her husband, James Crockett, much to her chagrin, is not present at their son's homecoming as he feels he must attend to his business as a sea captain and as a ship builder. Addressing Silas upon his arrival in Saturday Cove, Abigail Crockett curtly and succinctly says,

“Your father's in Machias . . . If this boat [the *Island Maid*] ever makes Eastport, which I doubt, he'll come back on her day after tomorrow. He took yesterday's stagecoach though I told him he shouldn't. He said you wouldn't hold it against him, and I could get my talking all done. There's a launching over there—some ship he's taken shares in, though why only he and the good Lord know. They hatch up schemes together, those two, and leave poor women folks to wonder at their nonsense” (25).

After making this rather forward statement of the facts, condemning her husband and “the good Lord” for not revealing “their nonsense” to her, Abigail finds herself feeling somewhat uneasy as to the reception of her words by Reverend Fisher who is standing nearby: “as she spoke them, she thought her words perhaps too daring in the presence of the pastor, the Reverend Ethan Fisher, who had himself come down to the pier to welcome home this young man of his flock” (25). Her thoughts in this particular vein continue only momentarily, for she quickly realizes that in all probability she

uttered them . . . in conscious defiance of the overlong sermon he had preached on Sunday last—a sermon in solemn warning against the jocoseness and blasphemy of many a seacoast town . . . The world was changing overnight, he had said, and not for the best with its means of transportation growing by leaps and bounds, and its boisterous singing-schools in too many places encroaching upon the evening prayer-meetings. He feared for the future of the young men and women of this perfidious generation, their future in this wicked world, their far more portentous future in the next. His ears had been assailed by the profanity of the shipyards and the careless, forward speech and behaviour of certain young females walking in God's acre on Sabbath afternoons that he had felt the urgent need

of supplicating his Saviour through many a sleepless night. She had listened to his tirade without a single misgiving in her mind, glad that she kneaded her loaves and set her bread to rise on Sunday morning, instead of on Saturday night as was usually her custom. As for James' mind as he sat in the corner of their pew, she knew full well that that was securely anchored to the cradle of the new ship awaiting her launching in Machias Bay.

Mr. Fisher belonged, she had always affirmed, rather to an inland parish than to one on the coast where morals were always more flexible in conception and application and where men who had sailed the Seven Seas were inclined to take a chance on the vengeance of God against an idle word now and then. Mr. Fisher's two sons, who were delving into theology at Harvard College, were but languid and feeble samples of young manhood when compared with Silas, and she could not wonder if [Mr. Fisher] were aware of the astonishing difference. And if he saw fit to send her an admonition as he had an irritating way of doing, a pious reminder of the influence her light words might imprint upon the budding thoughts of the young people on the pier—well, in that case she was not such a poor hand with the pen herself (25-26).

Abigail's defiant independence here is indicative of her demeanor and personality throughout her years as the Crockett family matriarch. She is a good woman who, as the narrator says, is "too wise and too rich in nature to be resigned to her common lot, knowing as she had all her life that in acceptance rather than in resignation lies the freedom of the spirit" (83). She must accept the world as she finds it, but she will not resign herself to all of its ludicrous ways and its religious absurdities. Life is precious and in short supply, as the early deaths of her sons have shown her, and she feels that she must live her life free from the impinging customs, social mores, and superstitions that can enslave the mind and spirit. She says what she means, and she means what she says. For her, there is little or no moral compunction in speaking forthrightly because to think a thing and not say it is far worse than saying a thing straight out. She, therefore, can go

about her business with a sense of humor and with a clear conscience, giving little credence to the Puritanism that insidiously engulfs nearly every other soul in Saturday Cove. She sees nothing sinful in creating humorous songs out of Bible stories, a practice unheard of in Saturday Cove in the 1850s. When questioned about her manipulation of the sacred scriptures and whether or not she is in danger of blasphemy, she tersely answers, ““ Nonsense! The Bible always did need to be livened up in parts, at least in my opinion”” (121). She can also say in a moment of extreme agitation, without the slightest fear of divine retribution, that ““The Lord has spoiled all Crocketts from the first by His gifts and graces. I’m not the one to continue with His bad work”” (121). And, she can even take her townsmen, the Select Committee of the Saturday Cove Social Library, to task for censoring what their fellow townspeople are allowed to read and study. As they replace novels that are considered sinful—*Humphrey Clinker*, *Tom Jones*, *Sentimental Journey*, and *The Fool of Quality*—with “other books deemed and considered more useful and of better influence to and upon their readers,” dry books on Puritan theology and ethics, Abigail Crockett manages to gain a foothold on their committee, and although she does not succeed in her initial revolution, she does, for the first time in the town’s history, give women “a proper voice in deliberation and discussion” of the community’s moral affairs (266).

If Abigail Crockett exerts a tremendous influence on the people of Saturday Cove, she bequeaths her greatest spiritual insights to her daughter-in-law, Solace. The two are kindred souls sojourning in, what Chase likes to call, a Puritan “Valley of Baca,” a figurative place where the experiences of sorrow may be turned, if handled properly, into joys everlasting (338). We are told that

Solace loved her afternoons with Abigail. Once dinner at twelve was finished and they themselves and the house were tidied up, they sat down with their sewing in the sitting-room. The afternoon was before them, serene, uninvaded, until the early lighting of the lamps should set Abigail again in motion. The snow without, crusted and glittering in the February cold or melting and settling before a high March wind, only increased the confidence and satisfaction which Solace felt within herself. Such hours to her were ample, replete, sufficient . . . The tall clock ticked on as they worked together; the birch logs crackled in the great fireplace. From the clean, orderly kitchen they could hear the singing of the teakettle, the occasional snapping of the fire, and smell the warm, rich smell of the beans baking in the brick oven. Their talk, interspersed by comfortable silences, was that desultory, intimate talk of women who have earned the right throughout the morning to busy themselves idly with their fingers in the afternoon (84).

On one such afternoon, while the two women share a conversation some eight years after Solace has given birth to a stillborn child and seems destined to remain childless, Abigail Crockett, in a storm of impatience with village society and its unabated predilection to superstition, gives her daughter-in-law the inner workings of her mind concerning God's role in the world. Puritanism has created people who think that they know how God deals with humans and their frailties—He punishes everyone who does not adhere to a strict, unrelenting Calvinistic code of conduct. The opinion of the village women, Solace's mother included, is that Solace remains childless because on her wedding day, Silas, in a moment of happiness and glee, picked her up in his arms, ran with her from the church door to the village cemetery, and raced up and down the paths of the cemetery until one of her satin slippers fell off and landed upon a tombstone belonging to three children who, as we are told, died in an epidemic that swept the town during its early settlement. Solace's slipper falling upon that particular gravestone on her wedding day is

seen as an evil omen, and the Crockett-Winship union, in their view at least, has been cursed because of Silas' impetuous actions and supposed irreverence. The narrator relates that "The Reverend Ethan Fisher . . . was the prey to grim forebodings concerning the future of a young woman in the hands of a man so obviously influenced by his sojourns in heathen lands that he had small respect for the dead; and Dorcas Winship was not the only woman who went toward the wedding reception uneasily conscious of the white slipper balanced precariously upon the old tombstone" (52). The women of Saturday Cove feel that they have been vindicated in their beliefs since Solace has been married nearly nine years and still has no children. As Solace gives vent to her fears that she is indeed being cursed by the dead or suffering under the wrath of God, her mother-in-law's spirit rises in righteous indignation. Abigail, we are told, glares "fiercely" at her daughter-in-law and puffs "a bit from exertion and disgust" (86). Her God is not an irrational tyrant; He does not treat humanity with such inexplicable hardness of heart or inexcusable cruelty. Her God is a loving and concerned Being who deals with mankind justly. Abigail Crockett's response to the lame ideas of her fellow villagers and their inane Puritan posturing are again indicative of her broad spirit and her superior intelligence:

"Stuff and nonsense! . . . Are the women in this village plain crazy with their old wives' tales and trappings? The dead wreak no vengeance on the living. They're too glad to be free from the troubles of this earth to concern themselves with poor mortals like us. And as for God—well, I never! Whatever God is, I don't believe He's that kind [of Being]. Silas may have been a fool—most of us are—but God isn't. Your mother's a good woman and a smart woman, Solace, but who is she to know about God or the dead either? You can't do much with the old, but the sooner young folks get rid of such stupid thoughts, the

better for all concerned . . . You've seen too much of the world, my dear, to put any faith in such clap-trap notions. And if your mother had come from different stock, she wouldn't. Seafaring's a rough life, but when the best of us go into it, it knocks nonsense out of our heads whatever it may put in place of it" (86).

If Abigail Crockett frees herself from a too vigorous form of Puritanism, she frees Solace from it as well. Through her constant influence, Solace comes to realize that God, whatever and wherever He may be, is not some kind of divine fury who wishes humankind to suffer for lapses in their judgment or for their sins. World travel has shown them both that sorrow and joy are universal; these human attributes may be found in all places and in all societies, in those that believe in a Christian God and in those that do not. People everywhere must stoically meet and accept whatever life brings their way—for good and for bad—if the species is to ever free itself from “stupid thoughts” and “clap-trap notions.” God, in Abigail's mind at least, is a force that wants all humans to live up to their full potential as logical and thinking beings, leading lives that are intelligent, worthy, and free from the evils of fear and superstition. At the time of her husband's death, she, writing to Solace and Silas in Canton, sums up her philosophy and religion:

“I myself am well . . . and I beg you both to have no concern about me. After sixty, one learns to expect such things, and I am only glad he did not have to live and suffer, which would have been a sore trial to him and to us all. My neighbors are extremely kind, and I find enough to busy myself about in the house and garden. I prove daily that hard work is the best antidote for sorrow, and, although I grieve for myself and for you, I have no useless regrets. He lived a full and good life, and he left you to carry on his work. I have faith to believe in another and better existence beyond this one, although I fear not as Mr. Fisher enjoins

me to picture it, for I think such a one entirely unsuited to your father" (77).

Solace, throughout the novel, recalls her mother-in-law's spirituality with fondness and love, "remembering the strength and serenity which Abigail Crockett had lent to her" and applying those things to "her [own] life . . . [with] small complaint . . . against whatever had determined it" (241).

Huldah (Barrett) Crockett, although she never meets Abigail and Solace, continues, in a more conventional way, the spiritual legacy of her predecessors. She too adheres to a broad and simplistic faith, a faith that is based upon nothing more than the idea that Almighty God exhibits only love and mercy toward His creatures. While Abigail and Solace renovated and revised their early theology with lessons learned abroad, Huldah, a native of Machias, an old sea-going town, as Chase points out time and time again, seems to have acquired some of her spiritual concepts in much the same way. She is, of course, well acquainted with nineteenth and early twentieth-century Puritanism, and she does identify herself strongly with the New England Congregational Church. She teaches in its Sunday School, sings in its choir, plays hymns on its wheezy pump organ, leads its evening prayer services, solicits food for its bake sales, and attends its Sunday morning worship services faithfully every week. But the church's ever-prevalent spiritual limitations and its excessive zeal, though much weakened since the Reverend Ethan Fisher's time, are never allowed to impinge upon her life or upon the very basic tenets of her faith. She is, as Chase and Perry Westbrook would say, a person who is "born again in spirit"; her life—full of her love for God and complete in its compassion toward all humanity—is her religion (Westbrook 159). Through her

character, as Westbrook further asserts, Chase “praises tranquil spirituality and unostentatious Christian living” (87). Huldah Crockett is a broadminded woman of Puritan descent who lives to make the burdens of others lighter, even while her own burdens, the complete paralysis of her legs due to the complications of childbirth, seem crushing, brutal, and unfair.

Huldah, however, never complains. She is a woman very much like Chase’s “aunt,” Caroline (McFarland) Lord, a truly resilient and

religious woman, by nature, training, and practice. Which of these elements, now tenaciously established within her, was chiefly responsible for her feeling, her thoughts, and her behaviour, it would be difficult to determine even with the help of modern psychological research and discovery. There have been, and still are, countless thousands like her who daily and quite unconsciously give a stout and wholesome lie to the reputed fundamentals of New England Puritanism. Whatever were the imperfections of the inflexible thought of Massachusetts Bay in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (and they were doubtless numerous) its heritage has unquestionably caused many a waste place to blossom and numberless minds and spirits to rejoice, if not in the Lord, then surely in those to whom the Lord has ministered His ways past finding out (337-338).

Giving a “stout and wholesome lie to the reputed fundamentals of New England Puritanism,” Huldah practices a faith that her own ancestors would not recognize, and yet, as the narrator says, “she had certain unshakable convictions and lived by them” (339). She is—like Abigail and Solace—both reasonable and inclusive in her religious views, and she remains “faithful to the highest inheritance of the best in Puritanism” (339). She is “no zealot, having too much both of humour and common sense to want to run the lives and thoughts of others” (338). She believes “that in the love of God and of

one's neighbor lay the secret to that abundant life which the Lord had come to give *all people*" [emphasis added] (339). And, as the narrator again tells us, "Huldah rejoiced in the Lord, quietly, constantly, effectually. She loved Him, believed that she knew Him or at least was no stranger to His mercies, lived by Him" (338). Huldah, throughout her life—both in times of good health and in times of pain and illness—makes known "her faith and . . . her conviction that all things work together for good to those that love God," and she seeks to do good for others in His name (340).

Huldah Crockett's religious faith, like that of Caroline Lord, seems a fitting completion of the good works started by Abigail and Solace. While the earlier Crockett wives see in God a Being who detests the ignorance found in old-time Puritanism, Huldah takes their personal convictions and applies them to her own life. She personally exhibits grace, "order and harmony," while under fire from forces she is unable to control. She does not become angry as Abigail so often did when society does not subscribe to her point of view, and she never for a moment fears that her paralytic condition, as Solace did her childlessness, is a judgment thrust upon her from God. She seems to understand better than they did that bad things often happen to good people, and that God and other people, doctors, nurses, even her own husband, Reuben, although they may be blamed or blame themselves, are not the cause of her affliction. Things happen in the universe that even God, in His wisdom and His power, does not like but, for some unknown reason, will not change. Huldah, in this knowledge, accepts her illness and creates her own "Valley of Baca," a place of peace and contentment that is based solely upon all the goodness and mercy she has received in her life. She loves God, not because she fears Him or thinks that He will bestow gifts, graces, or healing upon those who

supplicate Him, but because He is Love and is worthy to be loved for Himself alone. In this simple faith, there exists an order and harmony in the vast universe that leaves her mind uncluttered by thoughts of divine retribution and offers her “the crowning proof of the loving-kindness of God,” the constant adoration and love of her husband, Reuben, and more importantly, her son, the second Silas (338). “What then,” the narrator asks, “should she render unto God for His mercies?” (338). Her answer, like that of Abigail and Solace before her, is “translated into both thought and action” leaving “little to be desired by those among whom she lived” (338).

Huldah’s gospel, in short, becomes that of the ancient theologian, Pelagius—the concept that faith and salvation are best joined in the good works of one’s own hands. If Abigail Crockett found “hard work the best antidote for sorrow,” Huldah Crockett can say, as Sarah Peters did, that “sometimes you save your soul when there’s no other way to do it just by setting things right with your two hands” (Chase, *Mary Peters* 168). The goodness of Huldah’s faith is alive because she never allows her hands or mind to become idle. She epitomizes Chase’s own convictions concerning “that synthesis of the hand and of the mind, which arose from the idealism, the freedom, the simplicity of American [religious and educational] life” (Chase, *A Goodly Heritage* 262). Like Chase’s “aunt,” Caroline Lord, Huldah teaches those around her, most especially her son, how “order and harmony” may be created within their own simple, and sometimes bleak, surroundings and situation.

For Caroline Lord, as Chase tells us in *A Goodly Heritage*, “the order and harmony of her house were necessary to the order and harmony of her mind and spirit” (95-96). For Huldah Crockett, as she spends her time either in bed or in a special chair

bought for her by her husband at the onset of her paralysis, the order and harmony of her soul depends upon the work that she is able to perform for Reuben and Silas. In this important work—lending emotional and material support to her husband and raising an active, inquisitive son—Chase says that “the ‘old-time religion’ [of Pelagius and the Puritans too] was amply, in fact nobly, justified by its fruits” (340). Chase also writes that Huldah “never doubted that all things, food and drink and clothing, would be added unto one who sought first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and yet even while she sought both, she was not one to neglect her own share of the responsibility which the Lord, supplemented by the Apostle Paul, had made clear enough in a dozen places in her well-marked Testament” (340). Waiting upon God’s goodness and following the Apostle’s example, she takes responsibility for her household despite her ever-evident physical handicap. She knits her family’s mittens, stockings, and hats, sews and mends their clothes, and leads them in prayer and Bible reading while dispensing a tender, but nevertheless, stoic, unflinching, and immeasurable grace that illness cannot touch or thwart. Her grace is neither wasted nor squandered upon her son; Silas thrives in the hospitable and pleasant atmosphere that Huldah creates even though she cannot walk about as other mothers do: “Except for always sitting in a chair instead of moving about, his mother did all the things which, he grew up believing, boys’ mothers always did” (349). As the narrator tells us, Huldah, regardless of her pain and physical limitations,

taught him his letters, he sitting on a low stool at her feet, and at last to read by putting the letters that belonged to the anagram game into words and then with great excitement finding them in his father’s old primer. She made him willing to eat whatever was on his plate by telling him about the starving Belgians and how glad they would be to have his oatmeal and milk and even his potato and cod-liver oil.

She got him off to school every morning, saw that his hands were clean and his hair brushed, heard him say his spelling-lesson over and over until there was not the slightest chance of his missing catchy words like *believe* and *obedient* and *misled*, made sure that he had a clean handkerchief and that he distinctly understood he was to come home immediately from school to report his presence and receive further permissions. She taught him rhymes about his grammar lesson, which made it more clear . . . she read to him for hours on rainy afternoon and every evening before he went to bed. He lay on the worn rug before the fire with his head propped up between his hands and listened to *Robin Hood* and *King Arthur*, *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea*, and some old books that were falling in pieces, that they pasted together and made new covers for—*Two Years before the Mast* and *Mr. Midshipman Easy* (349-350).

As Silas grows, the important work that Huldah has undertaken on his behalf pays large dividends. He develops into an intelligent young man whose life, constantly assaulted by those troubling, tumultuous seas of change that have so plagued his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, is securely anchored to the abiding faith, love, and hope of his paraplegic, but ever-triumphant, mother. Chase writes that if these simple

tenets and doctrines to which [Huldah] unquestioningly gave her adherence can be torn from their high places by those who must know before they can believe, or swept out of sight by the searchlights of the new learning, at least the consequences of a faith such as hers remain inviolable, in themselves a truth of unassailable value whatever may be said or thought of its origins—the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. She was, in short, the kind of woman whose sons and daughters, themselves adrift on the wide sea of skepticism and unbelief, look upon with admiration and gratitude, knowing full well that whatever fastness they may build for themselves out of intellectual honesty can present no greater security or no richer resources than that which they have at least seen reared upon other and older foundations (340).

With Huldah's faith as his foundation, Silas will eventually rear his own spiritual perceptions, making easier the financial and emotional plight that his mother and father will face as the Great Depression takes its toll on the family's already slender treasury.

In his review of *Silas Crockett*, Robert P. T. Coffin states that the "Maine [maritime] culture was one in which pomp and principle went hand and hand, and . . . Chase makes both shine like the shores and houses among which they flourished" (191). The "pomp and principle" to which Coffin refers, what Chase would call the seafaring life and its imperishable values, is permanently and prominently displayed in the long-lasting luster, or "shine" of the "shores and houses" that this particular "Maine culture" both defined and built. While the seafaring life flourished, hardy men and women built ships of Maine timber cut upon their Maine shores and sailed these ships around the world. The money made from both of these profitable enterprises eventually reared, as Chase states in her opening pages of *A Goodly Heritage*, "substantial homes of wood and brick, homes with wide-mouthed chimneys, broad roofs and beautiful doorways" (16). Similarly, the characters she created in *Silas Crockett* built ships, sailed the mighty seas, and returned home to build houses that Perry Westbrook contends, "have few rivals anywhere in the world for their simple, impressive dignity" (82). The dignified houses that the Crocketts have called home, like the shores on which they built their ships and the church in which they worshipped, are, as Evelyn Dodge points out, a shining "memorial" to their larger, seafaring life and their more prosperous times (149).

In the tiny village of Saturday Cove, the Winship and Crockett houses, as perceptible memorials to the family's noble past, are the finest to be found among the one hundred or so dwelling clustered about the town's narrow harbor. Thomas Winship, we

are told, built his own home soon after he married in 1808; its artistic design and beautiful execution, though influenced by his early trips abroad, are entirely of his own construction. There are stately pillars at his front door, and his deftly carved sailing ships, exotic flowers, and figures depicting animals, fish, and sea-shells decorate the woodwork both within and without. The Crockett house, or the Crockett mansion, as it is sometimes called, was built by Amos Crockett as a wedding gift for his son, James Crockett, and his new daughter-in-law, Abigail (Shaw) Crockett, several years before Thomas Winship began his building career. The structure is square and imposing, is surrounded by formal gardens and terraces, is built with an elaborate front door that faces directly toward the sea, and is furnished with heirlooms brought back to Maine from the family's far voyages. Portraits of the early Crocketts painted by European masters hang on its parlor walls, hand-painted bone china purchased in Hong Kong, Canton, and Shanghai fills its kitchen cabinets, French paper depicting scenes from Versailles covers its many walls, and fine furniture—Hepplewhite and Chippendale pieces bought in Liverpool and London—completes its distinguished décor. Thomas Winship, although not responsible for this building's design and construction, may take, nevertheless, some credit for its overall beauty. Throughout his thirty-year career, he does do repair work to this building, adding some of his own artistic touches to an already grand, glorious, well-furnished, and well-maintained home. Both buildings signify the family's pride in its long sea-going heritage, what Solace Crockett, as a representative of both families, comes to recognize as a "memorial" to "the sacredness of tradition" and "the long dependence of the present upon the past" (263). In each, there exists an elegance and beauty that only the seafaring life and its foregoing gift—what Chase calls "the steady accumulation . . .

of means”—could supply (Chase, *Heritage* 15-16). The Winship and Crockett homes, both refined and both distinctive, are central to the novel’s sparse plot and the Crockett family history—their births, deaths, weddings, and funerals occur in one or the other of these two homes. And, through the symbolic significance of these two homes, first to Solace, and then to Reuben, and later to young Silas, Chase clearly illustrates that the artistic permanence of New England’s architecture, and an astute appreciation of it, serves as an important archive, or memorial, which forever suggests this family’s reverence for the “sacredness of [their] tradition.”

Solace Crockett, for the better part of her life, owns and maintains both of these notable homes. With the death of her parents, she inherits the Winship home in which she was both born and raised. With the death of Abigail Crockett in 1871, she also inherits the Crockett home in which her husband, son, and grandson were all born and in which she has spent the greatest part of her life. Although she loves both homes fiercely because of what they represent—the culture and intelligence of the people who built them and the people who have lived in them—Solace realizes that “when a woman married . . . she transferred her allegiance to the house of her husband where her children were born.” (268). She also acknowledges that such a transferal of sentiment “was right . . . and natural, but it was not always easy” (268).

Solace Crockett, throughout the novel, possesses an unconscious awareness that both of the homes are important parts of the Crockett family history, but the reality of their respective meanings is not portentously borne in upon her until near the end of her life. While she is raising her grandson, Reuben, she gradually realizes that the old homes and their contents have the potential to teach many important lessons, lessons that she

wants Reuben to learn and understand before she must die and leave him alone in the world. She sees that

since Reuben had never known the [Crockett] house as it had been in his grandfather's boyhood and even in his father's, it seemed to him the most satisfying of houses. He conceived, in fact, a premature affection for it, seeing in it far more than the place of warmth and protection accepted by most children when they think of home. He never approached it through the field from the shore where he had been playing or came up its old driveway through the snow, which banked it almost to its window sills, without feeling a surge of pride throughout his body, not only because it was his home but because it was stately and beautiful. And when he and his grandmother came home together on Sundays from church and followed the path, where grass now grew up through the gravel and clam-shells, to the side door beneath the lilacs, he always said to her no matter what the season: "I think, grandmother, that we have the best house in Saturday Cove—no, I mean in the whole world."

Perhaps it was her recognition of this feeling in him that prompted Solace to open the front parlour on Sundays. She and Abigail had rarely opened it during Nicholas' boyhood, using the sunnier back parlour for their sitting-room. But Nicholas, at least, during his father's life, reasoned Solace, had had small need of the better room with all the things it held, things which by their association and their worth might well impress a child with the graciousness and dignity of his heritage (249).

Reuben's affection for and need of the Crockett house puts Solace in an emotional as well as financial quandary. As the shipping industry has declined and the family's fortune has been completely decimated, she soon realizes that she is financially unable to maintain the elegance, and more importantly still, to retain possession of both homes. The only thing to be done, much to her sadness and dismay, is to sell the Winship home in order that she and her grandson might retain ownership of the Crockett

home. She had, she realizes, made her allegiance many years before, and “she herself had not for a moment considered selling the Crockett home, in spite of its better location and the more generous offers she had received for it” (268). In her decision to part with her childhood home and protect the Crockett homestead from dilapidation, she again recognizes a thought retained from her sea-going life, “if one waited and endured long enough, [moments of peace and security] were sure to come, dispelling all fears, blotting them out as though they were not” (90). Solace, out of love for her grandson and concern for his future, accepts the inevitable. She sells “her father’s house to two maiden ladies from Boston” with the peaceful and secure feeling that the house is going to people “who would have a feeling for it and for the ground on which it stood” and that she is somehow ministering to the future needs of her descendants (262).

By the time Solace reaches her eightieth birthday and decides to sell the Winship home, the Crockett house and its grounds have fallen into complete and utter disrepair. The gardens are overgrown, the terraces are breaking up and choked with weeds, and the old house, although loved by her and her grandson,

was now suffering the inroads of time and the reverses of fortune. It did not stand so squarely or so solidly upon its stone foundations as it had once stood. Its door-sills needed attention, and when a November wind took the last of the old leaves from the woodbine that all summer concealed the cracks and rotting wood above its white doorway facing the sea, it looked like an old house . . . The slope of its roof now sagged in places, and the roofs themselves could have done with fresh shingles had Solace Crockett been able to see her way to anything but necessary patching as occasion demanded. The green shutters rattled now within and without their framework; their paint was spotted with white from the salt of many fogs; and from the outworn fastener of each there hung a stout cord to ensure its security in a high wind . . .

Within matters were much the same. The great hall with its double curving staircase reaching from front to back wanted fresh paint and paper as did the rooms opening from it. The cracks in the floors had widened, and the floors themselves sagged a bit here and there with the sagging of their foundations. The doors were the doors of an old house, loose and uncertain in their latches, swinging lightly to one's touch instead of substantially and securely as doors swing when their jambs and sills are kept in proper repair. The wood of the window frames also showed dry and dusty beneath the paint, which had a way of peeling off as paint will peel when wood is soft and crumbling from age. There were cracks here and there in the plaster of the ceilings which were not surprising since James had been the last Crockett to replaster them.

The rooms themselves, gracious as they were when the sun lay full within them or when a fire burned below their white mantels, lacked the freshness of other days (247).

In order to restore the Crockett home to “the freshness of other days” and to leave something of tangible of worth and importance for Reuben and his descendants, Solace’s decision to sell the Winship home will provide the much needed money for renovation. This decision, as we know, is not lightly or easily made, partly because Solace loves the Winship house and partly because she had for some years envisioned turning it into something of lasting and tangible value for her community—a library and a museum that would pay homage to Saturday Cove’s maritime heritage. The old woman, recognizing the importance of tradition and heritage,

had had all sorts of dreams about the house even though she knew they were chimerical in view of her circumstances . . . She would have liked to think in her last years of the downstairs rooms being used for books, which people might even linger over to read on rainy afternoons instead of selecting one and carrying it straight homeward. The upstairs rooms, she had imagined, might be the

repository of manuscripts, log-books, records, old drawings, pictures and the like, which should preserve the history of a bit of the coast from carelessness, neglect, and ignorance. She would place there her father's plans of his fourteen meeting-houses, the specifications and figures of his lesser work, so that me might not in succeeding years pass entirely into oblivion. She would like to have had him remembered by the succeeding generations of Saturday Cove if only as a name. She would place, too, perhaps in her own room, the pictures of ships and the portraits of those who had commanded them. There were other families either in town or closely enough removed from it to be still interested who would be glad to contribute to such a collection. And later perhaps, even when the new century had half gone and not a square-rigged ship ran before the trades or the westerlies of either hemisphere, people would mount her father's winding staircase to her old room and look with respect and reverence upon the dignity and worth and grandeur which it held in trust within its walls. There would be other rooms for pieces of beautiful furniture, for bits of old china and damask, which people would be glad to spare from their family legacies, for shawls and other weaving and embroidery, made on foreign or home looms by strange or familiar hands . . .

She had abandoned the dream long before it had been fully born; it died daily even while it was coming to life; for it was preposterous, even in its vaguest outlines. In the first place, there must be found in Saturday Cove a sufficient number of those in authority who, because they had been well nurtured by the past, recognized the value of its preservation. That task in itself was problematical. The old seafaring families who had in large measure made that past were fast dying out; for now that shipping was over, building and voyaging alike, there was little to keep later generations in Saturday Cove, if there was money enough to leave it. The very enterprise which had sent their father and grandfathers across the seas sent them, after school and perhaps college were over, to the offices, universities, and hospitals of larger centers where the leaven which they added, although taken from home, was not lost. And if, perchance, there could be found among those who age, necessity, or sentiment had kept at home a sufficient number who might be depended upon to receive and administer her gift of the old Winship house, she must not for a moment forget that the gift was quite without

endowment of any sort. Libraries and museums must not only be housed but run, she told herself, smiling at the secret foolishness which had given her such pleasure (262-264).

Solace Crockett's desire to preserve "the history of a bit of the coast from carelessness, neglect and ignorance" is a noble ambition, one that Chase herself plainly appreciates, but the dream cannot become a reality. As Chase writes, the idea "died daily even while it was coming to life." Solace, in a sense, has been torn between what she feels may be her duty to her community and what she knows is her duty to her grandson. If she organizes a library and museum and turns the Winship home over to those purposes, there will be no money to maintain and ensure their existence, and she will certainly be without money to repair and renovate the Crockett homestead. *Everyone*, she realizes, herself, Reuben and his descendants, and the town by in large, would lose by such a worthy, but doomed, proposition. If, however, she sells her childhood home and makes much needed money by that sale, she can ensure the survival of the Crockett mansion, and thus, ensure the survival of Reuben's heritage as well.

The best estimation of Solace Crockett's predicament, and Chase's artistic relationship to it, may be summed up in statements made by Evelyn Dodge, who writes that

the wish which has often impelled Mary Ellen Chase in her writing, particularly in such a book as *Silas Crockett*, is close to the one felt by Solace Crockett when she imagined her memorial . . . There is no place in all she has written where this attitude toward the past is so well objectified as in *Silas Crockett*. She is not unique in her wish to preserve the past . . . this tendency goes beyond the confines of literature and has been found in the preservation and restoration of old buildings and pieces of furniture . . . Not all Americans, [however], share this feeling . . . The argument for and against the preservation of the past can

only be resolved by making proper use of the past (149-150).

Although Dodge fails to define what she means by a “proper use of the past,” she is correct in her assertion that “there is no place in all [that Chase] has written where this attitude toward the past is so well objectified as in *Silas Crockett*.” Chase, in this novel, is obviously disturbed that “not all Americans share” her interest in the past, for as she says in her early defense of *Silas Crockett*, the past is the starting point of all progress, “a fine thing to move on from” (“Noble History”). In order for there to be progress of any kind, whether within a family or within a nation, people must first know about their particular past and its imperishable values. Through *Silas Crockett*, Chase asks an important question: What is the best and easiest way to pass knowledge of the past on to future generations?

In *Silas Crockett*, Chase, as a social historian, defines the “proper use of the past” as the disbursement of historical knowledge to present and future generations. The novel is, of course, a work in which she hopes to picture, as she says in her Foreword, “the maritime life of the coast for one hundred years” (ix). As she sees it, the knowledge of the past is deeply important to any civilized society and must be passed on to future generations in one of two interrelated ways. Both ways are informative, and both have the potential to communicate the imperishable values behind any given culture. The first way is cooperative and communal—the establishment of libraries and museums where the past, through “the repository of manuscripts, log-books, records, old drawings, pictures and the like,” as Solace Crockett says, will be both preserved for the appreciation and education of future generations. The second way is more personal and occurs within the family unit—memories, traditions, and heirlooms being handed down from one

generation to the next, preserving the past and making it personally meaningful for those people whom will also become its recipients. Both methods are sensible, but the last, of course, is less complicated, requires less money, and in the end, accomplishes the same meaningful goal.

As we ponder Chase's intent in this archival area, we should remember that she was very much indebted to several historical institutions in her research for and construction of *Silas Crockett*. She also became, it is important to point out, a supporting member of and contributor to the Blue Hill Historical Society. As she writes in her 1936 defense of the novel, she relied heavily upon previous scholarship and research conducted at such institutions. Logbooks and diaries from Blue Hill Historical Society were used as primary sources, and the famous Essex Historical Institute in Salem, Massachusetts, where earlier authors "spent years . . . delving carefully . . . into the historical records of past years," provided "the best books . . . on the maritime history of New England" ("Noble History"). While Chase clearly applauds the idea of more libraries and museums, and while she certainly pictures this appreciation in Solace's desire to leave the Winship house as a lasting memorial to Saturday Cove's maritime heritage, she is, at the same time, recording an important trend that swept many small Maine towns while she was writing *Silas Crockett*. Of the nearly three hundred or so local historical societies existing in the State of Maine at present, approximately one-half of these were established in the decade of the 1930s. Several other historical societies established during that same decade, unfortunately, did not survive the financial hardships of the Great Depression because they, like Solace's dream in April 1890, had no special endowments or were not properly propagated by their founders and patrons.

In the end, though, Chase does seem to say that if a library or museum can be established that will survive and teach about the past, that then is a great and honorable accomplishment. In the case of Saturday Cove, as we already know, such an achievement cannot possibly come to fruition.

So, what then does a person do when such ideas and desires are not only financially impractical but completely unattainable as well? Chase's second level of thought in this regard, the answer she gives throughout the novel, never wavers. The best way to preserve and make good use of the past is to personally incorporate it into the lives and thoughts of present and future generations. Families, if they truly retain the graciousness and the dignity of their heritage, will teach their descendants, as her own family members taught her, about their history and imperishable values. The American culture, in all its varying and differing parts, depends upon this personal and intimate transferal of knowledge from one generation to another. People need not rely on libraries and museums to preserve their past; any family, by the retention of its heirlooms or its ancestral home, its memories and its traditions, can communicate, in a material and in spiritual sense, the importance of the past and the imperishable values that that particular past embodies.

Solace Crockett, before she dies in September 1890, has ensured the survival of Reuben's heritage; she has given him something substantial and meaningful which he and his descendants will later be able to remember with pride. Solace has given him the gift of the past, complete with the imperishable values and traditions embodied by their ancestral home. The Crockett house, which she signed over to him on his fourteenth birthday, "was exactly as she wanted to leave it for Reuben, after the scaffolding was

down and the vines replaced and the furniture within all set to rights” (273). In the refurbished house, he may know something of his ancestors and their lives upon the Maine coast before it was changed by the decline of the shipping industry and by the rising tide of tourism. Before her last illness, Solace and Reuben watch the progressive metamorphosis of their tired, old house into one of neat and trim graciousness again. The past is once more clear and visible in its transfigured state:

Most wonderful of all during that fresh summer when every unspent day seemed awake and alive was the gradual transformation of the old house, not so much even in its outward aspects as, through them, in that inner character which made it what it was. Now it no longer slumped upon its foundations or sank beneath its sagging roofs. Instead it raised itself proudly like a person who, imbued with new courage, holds his head high and his shoulders up, or like one whom new clothes suddenly reveal in a manner transcending even the clothes themselves. It was as though, thought Solace, it had been reanimated less by carpentry and brickwork and plastering than by the resurrection through them of the spirit which had lived a century within it. When she and Reuben after supper walked slowly through the field to the shore in order to turn back and look upon it standing there, they both felt, although they did not speak of it to each other, the intangible yet actual nature of its transformation.

Within it was the same. Judah and Amos, Benjamin and James, Abigail and Silas came back again with their old vigour once the rooms were spruce and new. Solace could hear Silas tearing up and down the stairs to fetch her wedding gifts and Abigail as a bride rattling her pots and pans as she hung them on her new kitchen walls in 1797. There was only one thing that she left as it was. That was the Versailles paper in the front parlour . . . Solace was glad to keep it. Reuben would be proud to show it to people, she told him, ten or twenty years hence, to tell them it came from France when Robespierre was making Paris a terrifying place and when noble heads were dropping one by one beneath the guillotine. She did not tell him that she herself would be glad to lie below it [in her coffin] when her time came (272-273).

Solace's recognition of the "resurrection of the spirit which had lived a century" within the Crockett house is symbolic of all that the family has experienced and accomplished through their successive generations under its roof. The house, in and of itself, is a lasting, beautiful, but uncharted museum that, as Chase says, catalogues "a noble history . . . [that] cherishes her past, transmutes it with all its gifts into the present, [and] reminds her children of their heritage" ("Noble History"). The Crocketts were, as we are told throughout the novel, a vital and exuberant people, steady in their work, progressive in their religious thinking, broad-minded in their views of the world, and ardent in their love of beauty and refinement. In the home they left to their descendants, "the intangible yet actual nature of its transformation" once more suggests all the attributes that have defined the family. Their collective characteristics—their likes and their dislikes, their triumphs and their defeats, their past and their imperishable values—are spiritually reborn and made obvious. Their familial pride is the pride of the old house itself, which repaired and renovated, "raised itself proudly like a person who, imbued with new courage, holds his head high and his shoulders up." The Crockett ancestors seem to come alive when the house looks, once more, as it did when they lived there. Its every feature, right down to the parlor wallpaper that Solace could not part with and that "Reuben would be proud to show . . . to people . . . ten or twenty years hence," has something significant to say about the past and the family's place in that past. They were prosperous, seafaring people who once counted the entire world as their work-yard and their domain; their home, substantial, aesthetic, and permanent, is, of course, a memorial to their way of life and the better times it represents. And, as Reuben eventually comes to realize, "a house . . . is

forever inseparable from those who built its hearthstones and once slept within its rooms” (357).

The 1890 transformation of the Crockett house proves to be just a short reprieve in a long and arduous litany of family setbacks. Within forty years, Reuben, beset with his own problems and crises, Huldah’s long and protracted illness, the slow demise of the steamship lines, his son’s need of money for college, and the loss of his own health due to encroaching old age, will be forced to part with most of his worldly possessions. By the late-1920s, Saturday Cove, now completely under siege from the summer people, is but a shadow of the place it was in the days of his father and grandfather. Trees now grow where the shipyards and dockyards once thrived; the Academy has become a modern and progressive high school; yachts ply the waters off Saturday Cove; pastures have given way to golf links; only the Congregational Church, with its yearly revival services and its weekly suppers, remains largely unchanged. The town, in the words of the old family friend and servant, Susan Gray, is now full of “n’er-do-wells,” people who ““work only in the summer an’ hang around air-tights all winter figurin’ how they can cheat them that come here for three months so’s to get enough out of ‘em to live on the remainin’ nine”” (299). The town’s reliance upon tourism and its subsequent undermining of the old New England work ethic, much to Reuben’s chagrin, is not the only thing that the new industry has changed within the village. He realizes that

to a discriminating eye the old houses, in spite of the fact that they stood much as they had stood for a hundred years or more, had suffered most from the pervading change . . . Many had been bought by summer residents, and although the houses themselves had gained in many ways by the transfer, those who had known them in earlier days looked upon them now with alien eyes. Some few families, like

the Crocketts, still held on, dreading the bitter but inevitable end (357).

The end, bitter and inevitable, as Chase writes, does come. With the 1929 collapse of Wall Street, life in Saturday Cove, as economically depressed as it has been since the 1860s, becomes bleaker and less prosperous than ever before. Reuben sells everything he has inherited from his grandmother to meet his pressing financial obligations. The foreign furniture and fine china goes to a shady antique dealer from Boston who does not pay him what the items are truly worth. That money goes to pay Silas' tuition at Bowdoin College. The family portraits are sold to a Mr. Schwartz, another disreputable and condescending dealer in fine art, who is more than willing to take advantage of the family's financial plight. This money goes to pay Huldah's doctor bills. By 1931, Reuben, nearly destitute with a mortgage hanging over his head, has run out of things to sell, but money is still very much needed. He finally decides he must sell the again dilapidated homestead to a wealthy businessman from Philadelphia. The Crocketts, we learn,

had at last come to selling. Reuben saw no other way out. In a few more years, he said, the house would be falling to pieces over their very heads. He said, too, and Huldah and Silas agreed with him, that it was almost more fair to the house itself to sell it rather than keep it in its present condition, which would have distressed the Crocketts dead even more than it distressed the Crocketts living (374).

Reuben Crockett, by this time an unemployed steamboat captain and a displaced homeowner, takes a poorly paying job in Eastport where he will operate a ferry boat. The family, taking what few things they retain—Thomas Winship's diary and drawings, the Crockett Family Bible, and what few pieces of fine furniture the antique dealers did not purchase—take up residence in a small rented house fifty or more miles away from their

ancestral home. His son, Silas, drops out of college after two years because he can no longer afford school. He cannot leave his aging parents alone in their time of need.

On the surface, Chase's unholy triad of time, chance, and tragedy has finally won out. But, the Crocketts, preserve another of their imperishable values—that of “fortitude” (Westbrook 88). Their fortitude, the freedom of spirit that comes from an acceptance rather than a resignation in life, allows them to move forward without a sense of remorse or regret. Although these modern Crocketts are defeated materially, they are, in all actuality, changed very little in the spiritual sense by their circumstances. As Chase writes for the *Portland Sunday Telegram*, Maine people “cannot lose sight of what has made them, but *must* forever remember it and be grateful for it, just as Reuben Crockett and young Silas remembered and were grateful” [emphasis added] (“Noble History”). True, the Crocketts have surrendered their belongings and their home in a fight for economic survival, but they have not surrendered themselves or their loyalty to tradition. They retain their heritage because it has been, in so many ways, ingrained within them; they *must* remember their heritage because they simply have no other choice in the matter. By precept and example, by experience and history, by spiritual as well as material gifts, their ancestors have secured a “Crockett future” by connecting them “daily with the Crockett past” (249). The Crocketts retain their good humor, their faith, their love of beauty, and their stoic acceptance of things just as they are. There is no sugarcoating of their situation, no pithy clichés to make things appear lighter or brighter than they actually are. They know that they are poor, and as the Great Depression deepens, they realize that they may very well become poorer still. But, as young Silas says when the time has come to sell the family portraits, “I don’t mind much, father . . .

Honest, I don't. I don't mind at all if you think it's best. I can always remember what they all look like'" (369). The art dealer, although despicable and greedy for the sale, does put everything into its proper perspective. He replies in truth: "'You're a philosopher, young man! . . . You've put the gist of the thing in a nutshell. It's remembering things in this old world that counts'" (370).

And, the second Silas Crockett will remember; he senses within his life the deep and satisfying "presence of the past," what Perry Westbrook calls the "spiritual perceptions [that] give the best promise for his future" (86-87). It is through his grateful remembrance of the past that the modern-day Crocketts retain another of their imperishable values—that of hope. He, at the novel's end, is Chase's symbolic embodiment of "the realization that out of simple beginnings, by toil, by adaptation to circumstances, and by seizure of occasions, one generation can give rise to a better" (Chase, *Heritage* 16). He comes to represent in his own time and place in history, as John Iorio appropriately states, "the search and celebration of the old virtues, of those life-giving forces that give man control over the chaos of the world and dignity in the face of what he cannot control" (29).

The first indication of his perceptions concerning the past comes at the funeral of his grandmother, Deborah (Parsons) Crockett Sawyer. Sitting in the Crockett parlor, looking at the family portraits hanging on the wall and listening to the minister's eulogy, complete with its references to death and to resurrection, the fourteen year old boy perceives the infinite within his midst, his personal relationship to *his people*, all people, and the passing of time:

Something happened to Silas as he heard the words,
something more strange even than the minister's prayer. A

door somewhere in his mind seemed to have swung wide open for a moment, allowing him dimly to understand that that which the minister was reading had really relatively little to do with the still figure in the coffin, that instead it had to do with all people and all things everywhere, with him and his mother and father, with days and hours, weeks and months and years, with the sun and moon and stars, with the assured faces of the Crockett men so alive on the walls, looking down at his grandmother who was dead. It was but a momentary perception . . . but he was always to remember in after years the odd and new experience of light thus flooding his thoughts (363-364).

Silas, in this moment, experiences an epiphany, what Chase in her own life calls “the mystery of the passing of laden centuries, the awfulness of time in relation to Timelessness, the littleness and unimportance of . . . all—things gigantic and intangible enough, yet dimly perceived” (Chase, *Heritage* 99). Silas’ perceptions of the past are, in themselves, mere glimpses, but he feels a transcendence in his “odd and new experience” of a “light thus flooding his thoughts.” He realizes through the death of his grandmother, a woman he has never met but who is responsible for his very existence, the importance of his relationship to all of his Crockett ancestors. He has never met them either, but they too are responsible for his life. They are alive in their portraits, and they are alive within him. Without their lives and genetic make-up, their passions and compassions, their work and toil, he would not be who and what he is. His place in the present—the parents he has, the house he lives in, the town he calls his home, the church he attends, the subjects he studies in school—may be directly attributed to their influences and their places in history. The things that they believed and the things that they accomplished in their own lives continue to touch and define his twentieth-century life. Silas Crockett, a gangling adolescent living in Saturday Cove, Maine, in 1924, finds himself just one link

in a long, continuous chain stretching back to Time Immemorial—connecting him, as it were, to a vast genealogy “with all people and all things everywhere.” But his moment of transcendence is both fragmented and fleeting; the door within his mind swings shut before he is able to understand all that his epiphany represents. In the course of his life, he will eventually realize that he is a living “memorial” to the “sacredness of [his ancestors’] traditions,” an example of “the long dependence of the present upon the past.” The hopes of the past will be resurrected within him, and as his future fiancée, Ann Sewall, tells him years later, “‘If it hadn’t been for all of them, I keep thinking, I shouldn’t have you now’” (400).

Silas, like his Crockett ancestors who first sailed the seas and first settled in the wilds of Maine, must begin a new life in a new place just as he drops out of college and turns twenty years old. Poverty, exacerbated and intensified by the Great Depression, has always made his life difficult. The family home is now gone, and he is no longer able to continue his education. He realizes, “sensibly enough, that there was small wisdom, especially during bad times, in using the little money that had been laid away for a rainy day in paying college bills for him when he was strong and well and had two hands of his own” (376). Work, however, is scarce, and with many reservations rising up within him as he dimly recalls something of his seafaring heritage, he applies for a job cutting and packing herring in a sardine factory. After his interview, Silas

thanked the manager, whom he liked in spite of his bluff ways, and turned to go out into the fresh air and away from the persistent smell of fish—fish dead and rotting, fish in the hold of many boats clinging to the wharves and awaiting their turn, fish cooking, fish drying, fish in oil. Then the manager had called him back, looking at him keenly and not unkindly as he said: “There’s something else I’d like to say. I know how this idea sits uneasy in

your insides just now . . . Maybe I don't know much about anything except herrin', but there's few men livin' that know any more about herrin' than I do. But that's not what I was aimin' to say. The people that work in this factory aren't Canucks or Eyetalians or even Irish. They're fine coast-of-Maine stock. Every jack-man on my rolls, and women, too, has a good English name attached to him. Their families did better things years ago in these parts and in other parts of the world, too, just as yours did, I take it. But this coast has changed. I'm tellin' you, and you've got to keep pace with bad times, no matter how it gripes you" (378).

Cutting and packing fish may not be to his liking, but his fortitude, his acceptance of his own financial situation and that of his family, demands that he work. He, after all, is not the only Maine native driven to take a job that seems totally out of keeping with his family's past. Many Maine families with a sea-going heritage "did better things years ago," but he must "keep pace with bad times." Within a week, Silas Crockett, the great-grandson of a respected and well-known shipmaster in the Chinese tea trade, "took his job and stood with the others of good English names at the first of the fish-tables" (380).

Percy Westbrook, writing of Silas' employment, states that

to those who know the 1930s the situation was typical enough—a man with two years in a first-rate college did the filthiest and most unskilled of jobs. There is waste in it, and tragedy. The question is: Will this last of the Crocketts survive in a capacity that in any way does honor to his name? . . . Chase leaves us somewhat in the dark, *but there is hope* [emphasis added] (86).

Westbrook's question in this passage seems based upon some kind of economic bias or professional elitism. He finds Silas Crockett's situation, although typical of his time, both tragic and wasteful. With that we may, on one level at least, concur. There is something demeaning in any talented and intelligent young person dropping out of college to take a job that is menial and unpleasant. Silas, like the "decent, self-respecting

people” he works with, has his own set of dreams; he would like to become a physician, but he lacks the money to finish his education. He and his family are barely surviving, barely paying their rent, and barely putting food on their table. If he cannot return to Bowdoin College, what then, is “this last of the Crocketts” to do? Is it better for him to work in a sardine factory, degrading as that may be, and be able to support his family? Or, is it better for him to become an idler because the only available jobs along the coast are not to his liking or suited to his talents?

Chase, a New Englander raised to abhor idleness of any kind, comes out strongly in favor of Silas’ choice of employment. He is neither tragic nor is he wasting himself in this Eastport fish factory as Westbrook asserts. Silas Crockett is earning a living when many people cannot and will not find employment. He should be commended for his actions; for in this feat, he exhibits some of the luck and resolve of the earlier Crocketts. And he, like his ancestors before him, finds honor in hard and honest labor. In his act of final acceptance, in his willingness to work at whatever job he can find, in his ability to help his parents, Chase clearly implies that Silas not only produces hope for himself and for his family—he also brings honor to the Crockett name. His situation, after all, is not unlike that of his uncomplaining and patient mother, Huldah. Although she is unable to move about as other people do, she finds hope and salvation in work—any and all tasks that she can perform which will brighten and make easier the lives of her loved ones are noble. Silas, while he may never be able to return to college, is earning a living, attending to the financial needs of his ill parents, and building his life upon the work ethic of Huldah and the earlier Crocketts. The biblical allusion Chase assigns his mother may be applied to him as well: “She never doubted that all things, food and drink and

clothing, would be added unto one who sought first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and yet even while she sought both, she was not one to neglect her own share of the responsibility” (339-340). And, Silas Crockett does not neglect faith or responsibility either. He will find that fortitude, hard work, and hope are his only means to a successful and productive life.

After Silas has made his decision and begins his new job, his father recognizes something of the old Crocketts welling up within him. Silas, as mentioned already, is a throwback to the past. Unlike Reuben, who is somewhat slow and plodding—perhaps a throwback to his Shaw ancestry as Solace once suggested—Silas is full of the old-time Crockett vim and vigor. With the money earned at his new job and through the influence of his girlfriend, Ann Sewall, he

laughed and sang and tore about the house, was forever thinking of things for them to do, places for them to go. He seemed now to be letting loose a store of energy which he had seemingly never possessed before in such measure. He was going up by leaps and bounds in the factory, earning more money each month. He wore his clothes well, now that he occasionally had some new ones, was so tall and handsome and well set-up that Reuben was puzzled, at times, in fact, a bit dismayed in the midst of his pride and pleasure (386).

The young Silas has inherited the first Silas’ good looks and bearing. He tears about the house much as his great-grandfather did when courting the young and beautiful Solace Winship. Reuben, looking at him and realizing the connection, tells Huldah,

“He’s not a bit like me . . . He’s all Crockett, I guess. I shouldn’t wonder if he was like the old Silas we named him after. My grandmother used to tell me when I was little about how handsome he was and what a fine figure he cut all over the world. Ann was saying just the other evening from those books she’s been reading how people take back

sometimes for their appearance and their traits. I guess
Silas has taken back all right” (386).

Although “Silas has taken back” to the first Silas Crockett in terms of his looks and deportment, he possesses an attitude very much at variance with that of his great-grandfather. He is, like the earlier Crocketts, given to hard work, but unlike them, he is not so demanding in his expectations and preferences. His job in the fish factory is ample evidence of this fact—tough times demand tough decisions—and patience. The elder Silas Crockett could not accept change, could not give up his seafaring life when times clearly demanded that he do so, and thus, he died a frustrated and embittered man.

Nicholas, the grandfather who died before his own father was even born, was much the same. He could not accept change, much as he tried, and he, unable to contend with his wife’s disapproval, died with only his convictions against steam-driven ships as a comfort and consolation.

The young Silas will have none of this in his own life. He will have convictions and beliefs. He will work hard, and he will eventually prosper. But, he, like Mary Peters, will patiently find that life is “a kind of waiting—waiting upon the graciousness and bounty of the things which had been, in order that the things to come might find one free and unafraid” (Chase, *Mary Peters* 377). His attitude is obviously drawn from the Winship gene pool and his great-grandmother’s wisdom. Solace, during a stay in Paris after a long and difficult voyage a century before, we are told,

lay beside [her husband] in their hotel, hearing while he slept the deep, echoing tones of the great bells calling the people churchward. She never forgot those grave, resounding notes reverberating through the still air, nor the clatter of sabots on the pavement and through the cobbled streets. For moments of such peace and security, she thought, she would endure any number of dangers. And if

one waited and endured long enough, they were sure to come, dispelling all fears, blotting them out as though they were not (90).

While the elder Silas and Nicholas never stayed still long enough in one place for the peace and security to catch up with them, Solace did. While they could not blot out their fears for the future, she could. Solace, through the example of her mother-in-law, Abigail, learned early that “since the past had moved backward into oblivion and the future refused to picture itself, fears became absurd and futile” (112). She patiently learned to accept whatever presently came her way—the birth of her still born baby, the deaths of her beloved parents, the early death of her husband, the even earlier death of her only son, her poverty, and her personal disappointments—while always waiting for peaceful and serene reprieves to arrive. They arrived in abundance—in the birth of Reuben, her only grandson, in her friendship with Susan Gray, her servant and confidante, in the restoration of the Crockett house, and finally, in the silence and rest of death itself.

Young Silas Crockett, retaining some of Solace’s “steadfast devotion . . . through years of fear,” learns his lessons in this area in much the same way (403). He is, as John Iorio would say, the quintessential Chase character, for in his “readiness for hope, with the necessary corollaries of waiting and patience,” he becomes “dynamic” (33). His life, like that of his great-grandmother, has not been an easy one. Poverty has dogged him since birth; his mother is paralyzed; his father is growing old and infirm; his family is separated from their old home and their friends; his college career is prematurely ended. He realizes, as his mother tells him, that ““you lose your life once you try to save it, but that once you are willing to let it go, you keep it forevermore”” (396). In the act of letting

go of his regrets of the past and his fears of the future, Silas is reborn and saves his own life forevermore. He finds his own share of peace and contentment in the new life that destiny has thrust upon him. He comes to believe “in new possibilities amidst the catastrophes of change” (Iorio 33). Problems, though they will still come, cannot compare to the love he has found with Ann, the money he has earned by his own exertions, or the dim perceptions he has retained of his family’s past. In this new life, he “awoke and blossomed like the green bay tree of the Psalmist” (386).

Silas Crockett, while he has dispelled all fears for his own immediate future, must try to patiently help to blot out or circumvent his father’s fear. Reuben Crockett, now elderly, ill, and emotionally depressed, suffers from “an accumulation of worries that had long been pressing against him” (388). The Crockett house, which he reluctantly sold for pressing financial reasons, now haunts him:

he had the old house on his mind and it stayed there, solid and substantial as it doubtless now was under its new owners. He forgot the stark necessity which commanded him to sell it. If he could only have looked ahead into the future, he kept saying, could have foreseen that Silas would do well in spite of leaving college, he might have been able to hold on to it. He never wanted to see it again, he said, but he would like to know how it had fared, whether the same woodbine framed its doorway, the small lilacs stood by its door rock. He was plain homesick . . . That was the matter with him (389).

Reuben’s worries about the condition of the old house and his regrets over selling it put him squarely in the category of his father and grandfather. He too is unequipped to face the changes that his place in history has required of him. Silas, in the company of Ann, must return to Saturday Cove in order to put his father’s mind at ease: “Silas like Reuben had not wanted to go back, but with Ann, as with God, all things were possible” (389).

The trip proves to be a difficult one because what he finds there will be disturbing to his father. The house and its yard are greatly changed: the woodbine and lilacs have been uprooted and replaced by evergreen shrubs; the barn has been converted into a garage; the adjacent fields have given way to a golf course; the house, though glowing under new paint and new shingles, is strictly off limits to everyone. Silas and Ann never gain entrance, a servant promptly turns them away. His report to Reuben, out of sheer necessity, must skirt the glaring realities of the situation: ““Yes, father . . . They’re keeping it up first rate . . . The view is just the same, and they’ve made a lovely garden in front of the house”” (393). While Silas is not happy with the changes he finds in Saturday Cove, he also realizes that his father did all that he could under their very trying financial circumstances. He has peace and security in this realization. The Crockett house, although different in many respects, remains unchanged within his heart and mind; it still suggests, as his great-grandmother truly believed, “the graciousness and dignity of his heritage.” Silas tries to reassure his father: ““ I somehow feel it *is* ours, father, just the same . . . I thought today we’d done the best thing we could possibly do by selling it as we did. There isn’t a Crockett that ever lived who couldn’t be proud of the way it looks now. We’ve—we’ve kept it by letting it go”” (395).

Although some may argue that Silas’ deception of his father is immoral, lying, after all, is not in keeping with the religious values of his family, Chase offers a different perspective. Silas offers hope to a man who desperately needs it, and therefore, may be absolved of any willful wrongdoing. As John Iorio states, “A world without hope is a world without freedom and responsibility . . . Chase never allows her people this ultimate defeat” (33). Young Silas possesses new hope in abundance, and he, therefore, has the

responsibility to help restore his father's confidence in a decision that was not easy to make. Silas has the freedom to act accordingly, and he does. He realizes, as Chase does in "The Saints in Maine," that the "truth must of necessity have various forms according to the character of this creative life" (Chase, *Asse* 147). Silas, summing up his position later to Ann, says "'I believe that truth is a much bigger thing than just what you can prove in your mind about it'" (403). He believes, as Chase distinctly did, that there is an intrinsic and literal truth that is most often complemented by a truth that is aesthetic, artistic, and poetic. These "varying forms" of truth, as Chase asserts, are often indistinct and overlapping, signifying the overall "Truth of Harmony and Order" (Chase, *Asse* 148). Searching for this middle ground, Silas offers his father this "Truth of Harmony and Order" in order to encourage his recovery. The truth aesthetic decrees that the old Crockett place is changed very little; the truth intrinsic reclaims the house for their own although they no longer retain its title. Silas Crockett, in this trip to his own immediate past, has realized that such "moments of peace and security" are "sure to come, dispelling all fears." Both he and his father find comfort and relief, they have "kept [their heritage] by letting [the Crockett house] go," and Reuben's homesickness and regret are blotted out "as though they were not." Reuben, out of a grateful and calmed heart, tells his son, "'That's fine . . . I do feel better about things'" (394).

At the novel's conclusion, Chase, making her strongest argument for the importance of the past in its relationship to both the present and the future, brings this "story of four generations of a Maine seafaring family . . . [and] the maritime life of the coast for one hundred years" full-cycle (ix). The family saga, which began in 1830 with the first Silas Crockett racing through the village cemetery with his bride in his arms,

draws to a close in much the same way. The second Silas Crockett and Ann Sewall, now happily engaged and at the same ages as their predecessors in 1830, make one last trip to Saturday Cove. They go, symbolically enough, on Memorial Day, 1933, a time to gratefully remember the lives and sacrifices of one's own family. They make no visit to the Crockett home, but instead, linger about the graves of Silas' ancestors. As they talk there about this headstone and that, Silas, though raised to cherish his family's past, realizes how little he actually knows about his family's history. He apologetically tells Ann,

"I'm afraid I don't know very much about any of them . . . It seems wrong, standing here among them, not to know. But I don't. I know my grandfather was frozen to death in his watch when he went on a fishing schooner. It seems as though I ought to know more about him since it was only sixty years ago. And I know my great-grandfather Silas was a handsome man, too, and sailed all over the world with my great-grandmother Solace there. She brought up my father. I know that. He says she was a wonderful woman" (399).

In Silas' realization, hope, the hope of all the Crocketts throughout the three centuries they represent, is resurrected. Pondering the relationship between his ancestors' convictions and his own modern beliefs, he experiences another epiphany, one which continues the first with articulation and complete understanding: "People say the past is dead, but it can't be. I feel it coming back whenever I see a dingy old schooner like that one out there beating along the coast" (401). Silas, in this transcendent moment, becomes "a prophet" not unlike "Moses and Isaiah and all the rest having visions in holy places" that "they always marked . . . with stones" (403-404). He

stood by the old graves in the wind-blown grass looking seaward, his face suddenly alight. With Ann's words and in the sureness of her love for him, there swept over him a

flash of understanding, clearer than that years ago at his grandmother's funeral when the opened door in his mind had swung suddenly shut. Now, whatever of mental darkness and confusion might follow, he knew, for that moment at least, the way was broad and straight before his face.

"... All the things we've learned can't take away what's rooted in us through generations like these around us and through this coast and sea. Believing in a thing doesn't mean that you've got to understand all about it at first. That's where our generation makes its mistake, it seems to me. I think believing in a thing means hanging onto it because you know it's good and, even when you lose faith in it for a time, still hanging on to what it did for you when you had it" (402-403).

Evelyn Dodge believes that through Silas Crockett's two epiphanies, or his moments of transcendence, Mary Ellen Chase expresses "one of the basic concerns of her thinking, . . . that the young . . . acquire enough of the past to be able to carry at least a portion of their future with them" (134-135). In *Mary Peters*, for example, the past became an immediate and personal affair, and the main characters, Mary and her mother, Sarah, retained memories of their lives spent on the sea. The sights they saw and their reflections on them defined their present and their future lives. In *Silas Crockett*, the imperishable values of the sea-going culture are transmitted to the various generations and characters in several different ways—personal memories, family legends, tangible items (i.e. buildings, paintings, home furnishings) all play a part in the novel's construction. But, so do the inherent traits and characteristics of the family. Dodge writes,

The author devoted a great deal of care and, as she explained in the Foreword, "much interesting study" to the background material of the book. Yet, within the story itself, the very details which the author makes vivid for the

reader become blurred to the second Silas. For him it seemed enough that the past has been; he was not so bound by it quite as his father Reuben and his grandfather Nicholas had been . . . The author was careful in her allotment of names and her distribution of family characteristics . . . Taking heed of the title, one sees that a function of Nicholas and Reuben is to transmit the traits of the first Silas to the second (138).

The younger Silas Crockett has absorbed the past in all the ways that have been mentioned above, but as Dodge asserts, it has remained murky and blurred to him. He has learned about the past just as Nicholas and Reuben learned about them—through the various conscious and unconscious efforts of his family. But the preceding generations have passed along certitudes and truths that cannot be put into words, for they touch upon subjects which are so deep and fraught with meaning that language simply breaks down in their presence. These truths are called up by and then retained through perceptions, what Evelyn Dodge refers to as ideas that come “more as a result of intuition than from direct search” (159). The second Silas Crockett never researches the past or its many meanings to his life in any scholarly or studious way. Both are simply borne in upon him as he realizes just how little he actually knows about the subject. He never met his grandmother, Deborah, before she died, and he knew relatively little about her actual life. The mental door opened at her funeral. He realizes how little he knows about his other progenitors, and yet, as he stands in the cemetery trying to recall the details of their respective lives, “the way was [made] broad and straight before his face” (402).

Silas Crockett, in his first “flash of understanding,” became vaguely aware that he was connected to his ancestors although he never knew them. Their lives in the past had a direct material and spiritual bearing on his immediate life as a fourteen year old boy in Saturday Cove, Maine. In his second “flash of understanding,” he becomes aware that he

possesses convictions “rooted” in himself “through generations like these . . . and through [the] coast and sea.” He does not understand everything about his ancestors’ lives because time has obscured many of the details, but he knows that their convictions have touched him and will continue to touch him in special ways. His fortitude, his work ethic, his love and service to his family, his search for peace and security, his hope for the future, though he has never realized it before, are all the gifts of his ancestors and their sea-going culture. Each generation, each man and each woman within his pedigree, has bequeathed some special gift to him. Through the second Silas Crockett, Mary Ellen Chase here asserts her own conviction that the traditions and imperishable values of the past are the traditions and imperishable values which will make for a more meaningful present and a more hopeful future to all those wise enough to recognize and appreciate them. They provide a spiritual yardstick by which to measure all human progress, and as John Iorio writes, “out of the great . . . past this spirit [of humanity] rises once more to its triumph” (29). At the novel’s conclusion, Silas, triumphant in his perceptions of the past and its importance to the life he and Ann are just beginning, represents one small portion of that continuous and uplifting spiritual progression:

[Ann] still knelt on the grass, looking up at him. There was in his face and bearing more conviction even than in his words. What was lost to her in one was made up abundantly by the other. She had never seen Silas so alive and glowing . . . Looking out from his eyes, standing firmly in the poise of his head were unchangeable things—the daring of Amos and James, the humorous wisdom of Abigail, the steadfast devotion of Solace through years of fear, the faith of Silas and Nicholas hanging to fast-dying sail with the world against them, the [now] secure and patient ways of Reuben, the unshaken and glorious reality of Huldah’s love for God. Ann did not know them for what

they were, but she saw them there—the substance of all things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen, the everlasting triumph over time and chance (403).

CONCLUSION

Writing in an essay entitled “My Hometown Revisited” for *Tomorrow Magazine* in 1949, Mary Ellen Chase states that when her life came to its conclusion, she, like all of her family before her, would take one “last journey” to Blue Hill’s “graveyard by the sea” (39). Her last journey, fortunately enough for the world that she left, came only after eighty-six years of long and productive life. True to the prophecy of her idol, Sarah Orne Jewett, Chase wrote books, essays, and magazine articles all about Maine—writings, that at the time of her death, earned her the accolade of “first among New England literary ladies of her generation” (“Obituary”). To these very substantial records of her own culture and immediate background, she added other and numerous volumes, books about her life and sojourns in England, critical studies of the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, and college textbooks that still manage after many decades to find their way into present-day classrooms. And, true to the prophecy she made some twenty-four years before her death, she was indeed brought back to Blue Hill to rest forevermore among her Maine ancestors, relatives, and friends.

In the beautiful Seaside Cemetery, amidst the oaks trees planted by her beloved grandmother, Eliza Wescott Chase, after the deaths of her two daughters in the mid-nineteenth century, Mary Ellen Chase, the hometown woman who “made good in life,” as the old expression goes, is interred beneath a simple, gray Saxon cross. Her inscription, poignantly enough, reads:

MARY ELLEN CHASE
1887-1973
“They shall mount up with wings as eagles”

It has been said on more than one occasion that one cannot visit Chase's grave without feeling in some way the lingering reality of a dynamic, spiritual presence. There are obvious reasons for this feeling. Chase's earthly remains rest among the people and scenes she immortalized, and in her artistic process, she quite simply immortalized herself. People the world over who know her books and who feel that they somehow know her too, make their own journeys to this old New England graveyard out of respect and reverence for her memory. It is not uncommon to find bouquets of flowers and small mementos laid at the foot of her granite headstone, attesting to the fact that thirty years after her death the author still retains the ability to touch lives and fire imaginations.

Chase, ever the reserved and reticent New Englander, would, of course, find great humor in such assertions. She was from all reports the most self-effacing and self-deprecating writer the world has probably ever known. As she once told Hugh Stalker, a loyal fan from Grosse Peak, Michigan, she could not under any circumstances be cajoled into reading any of her own books (Chase, Letter). When her proofreading was finished and her newest manuscript was safely in the hands of her editors, she usually turned her literary attentions elsewhere. She found great profit in reading the English classics of Eliot, Dickens, the Brontes, and Hardy. Among the Americans, she returned again and again to Emerson, Thoreau, Jewett, Cather, and Frost. For within those authors and within their works, she found a solace and a comfort during life's troubling times. As she states in *A Goodly Fellowship*, the study of English is "more closely related to life than any other study, even the sciences . . . It is a language . . . It is an art . . . It seems the handmaiden to other subjects rather than the mistress of them all, simply because no other subject can be understood without it" (267-268). In good literature and in good

writing, she found as much hope for the future of humanity as she acquired in her study of the King James Bible.

And, hope, after all, whether it was her own or that of someone else, was Mary Ellen Chase's greatest concern. She sought through her many works to show her readers that they, like so many of those people who preceded them, possessed a wealth of spiritual resources that could change their lives and make their existence, despite the hardships or calamities of the modern world, tranquil. This idea is perhaps best summed up in Lewis Gannett's review of *The Edge of Darkness*, a review that speaks as much about Chase's life as it does about her art. The two are inseparable. Gannett states that this

serene and satisfying book completes a circle. As a novel, it is static; it is a distillation of a moment. But, that moment is shaped, the novel makes clear, by a long past; and . . . Chase is not one of the Maine writers who see Maine's glory as finished in the past (5).

While Chase's life was never static—she quite simply never rested from writing, lecturing, teaching, and travelling—it did make its own circle, a circle that began and ended with her childhood memories of Blue Hill, Maine. Looking at the lives of her various relatives and ancestors in relation to her own, she found many moments in her harried schedule to distill, or extract and purify, moments both serene and satisfying. The long past of New England shaped her life and shaped her works. In her autobiographies, essays, and novels, her grandparents and their examples of Yankee wisdom and resilience could live again. Her extended family, her “aunts,” “Cad,” “Do”, and Mary Ann, could offer their humorous, but nevertheless apropos, wisdom to the modern world. Through the character of Mary Peters, she could show how one moment and one beatific vision

could protect the soul and mind from fear and bitterness. Through the young Silas Crockett, she could show how the old New England virtues could be retained and cherished as a portion of a family's dignity and goodly heritage. And, yes, she too showed how the glory of New England and Maine was not finished in the past.

And thus, the people still journey to Blue Hill, looking there for the forces that gave rise to a remarkable life and an optimistic literary canon. Chase's epitaph, of course, is taken from Isaiah 40:31, her favorite portion of the Bible: "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk, and not faint." The phrase chosen to grace her headstone is entirely appropriate, for in a writing career which spanned three-quarters of the twentieth century she tried tirelessly to convey the message and hope implicit in her epitaph—humankind could and would rise above itself in this material, changing world if it focused on its eternal spiritual resources. The many people who repose both with and near her in Blue Hill's Seaside Cemetery served as harbingers of this message. In their lives and through their examples, Mary Ellen Chase viewed a human progression that made the past important, the present less frightening, the future more hopeful.

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Mr. Chesley is currently employed as a Process Technician at the Eastern Paper Co. in Lincoln, Maine. He also serves the Town of Woodville as Chair of the Board of Selectpersons. He is a member and trustee of the Chester Baptist Church in Chester, Maine, a charter member and past president of the Marion Kimball Memorial Historical Society of Chester, Maine, and a charter member, president, and publicity chair of the Woodville Community Club in Woodville, Maine. He is also a member of Mattanawcook Grange #199 of Lincoln. He and his wife, Sandra Elaine (Perry) Chesley, are the parents of two children, Jessica Marie Salas and William Towle Chesley. Mr. Chesley is a candidate for the Master of Arts degree in English from The University of Maine in May, 2003.