

## Salmon Portland Chase

By David L. Mowery

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Salmon Portland Chase, renowned American lawyer and statesman, was born to Ithamar and Janette Ralston Chase at Cornish, New Hampshire, on January 13, 1808.<sup>1</sup> In 1820, Salmon was sent to Ohio to live with his uncle, Philander Chase. While residing in Ohio, Salmon attended Cincinnati College from 1822 to 1823.<sup>2</sup> He returned to New Hampshire and was admitted to Dartmouth (N.H.) College in 1824, from which he graduated in 1826.<sup>3</sup> He studied law under U.S. Attorney General William Wirt in Washington, D.C., from 1827-1829, and on December 14, 1829, Salmon was admitted to the Maryland bar.<sup>4</sup> He moved to Cincinnati in March 1830 and was admitted to the Ohio bar in June of that year.<sup>5</sup>

In September 1830, Salmon P. Chase established his first law practice in a brick building that stood at the northeast corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and Main Street in downtown Cincinnati, Ohio. Chase rented the first floor of the building at \$6.00 a month, and he partitioned the space such that the front portion served as his law office, while the back portion became his temporary living quarters. Chase formed several law partnerships here, and he accepted students into his firm; George Hoadly, the Governor of Ohio from 1884 to 1885, studied law in this office from 1846 to 1847 and became a partner in Chase's firm in 1847. Chase would maintain his law office on the north side of East 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, between Sycamore and Main Streets, until 1858, when he placed his portion of the practice under the care of his law partners, Flamen Ball and Ralston Skinner.<sup>6</sup>

In 1833, Chase published a new edition of the *Statutes of Ohio*, which later became known as "Chase's Statutes." This work earned him recognition among attorneys nationwide.<sup>7</sup> Acting as the defense lawyer on several fugitive slave cases in Ohio, Chase became nationally known as an anti-slavery advocate. Among the most famous cases in which he defended the anti-slavery cause were the *Matilda case* (1837), *Ohio vs. Birney* (1837), and *Wharton Jones vs. Van Zandt* (1842-1847).<sup>8</sup>

Chase carried his abolitionist views into Ohio politics. His first venture into politics was as a Whig on the Cincinnati City Council from 1840 to 1841.<sup>9</sup> In 1841, Chase abandoned the Whig Party and became the most significant participant in organizing the Liberty Party, the first nationwide anti-slavery political group.<sup>10</sup> As a result of his work in 1848 in framing the Free-Soil platform and in obtaining Liberty party backing, Chase became a leader within the Free-Soil Party, the forerunner of the Republican Party. By this time, he had emerged as the political leader of the abolitionists in Ohio.<sup>11</sup> He was elected to the U.S. Senate as a Free-Soil Democrat from Ohio in 1849, and he held this seat until 1855.<sup>12</sup> He helped organize and promote the first Republican Party national convention in 1856. He then served as Ohio's first Republican Governor from 1856-1860.<sup>13</sup> In 1860, Chase was elected as a Republican to the United States Senate, but he resigned his seat on March 6, 1861, to accept the appointment of Secretary of the Treasury offered by President Abraham Lincoln.<sup>14</sup>

Although Salmon P. Chase had no professional background in finance, he performed his duties as Secretary of the Treasury with competence and political savvy.<sup>15</sup> Faced with the daunting task of supplying funds for the Union war effort, Chase successfully promoted several innovative ideas for raising revenue. He introduced the nation's first federal tax on income, and he created the Bureau of Internal Revenue (later renamed the Internal Revenue Service) to collect stamp taxes, internal duties, and income taxes.<sup>16</sup> Chase also introduced the nation's first system of federal paper currency, nicknamed "greenbacks," and established the Bureau of Engraving and Printing to produce them. To manage this new government currency, he created a national banking system that existed until the formation of the Federal Reserve System in 1913. In addition, Chase opened the U.S. bond market to the general public for the first time in the nation's history.<sup>17</sup>

Following the scandal ignited by the *Pomeroy Circular* of 1864, Chase tendered his resignation as Secretary of the Treasury. President Lincoln accepted the resignation on June 30, 1864.<sup>18</sup> However, when Chief Justice Roger B. Taney died in late 1864, President Lincoln appointed Salmon Chase to be Taney's successor. Chase accepted the appointment and was sworn in as Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court in December 1864.<sup>19</sup> As Supreme Court Chief Justice during the Reconstruction period, Chase avidly supported universal suffrage and equal legal rights for all citizens, and his court declared that secession was unconstitutional.<sup>20</sup> He also presided over the Senate impeachment trial of President Andrew Johnson in 1868.<sup>21</sup>

Salmon P. Chase died in New York City on May 7, 1873. He was first buried in Oak Hill Cemetery in Washington, D.C. In 1886 his body was re-interred in Spring Grove Cemetery (Sec. 30, Lots 10 and 11) in Cincinnati, Ohio.<sup>22</sup> He rests in Spring Grove Cemetery today alongside his brother, his three wives, and five of his children, including daughter Kate Chase Sprague (1840-1899), a famous Washington socialite of the Civil War era.<sup>23</sup>

## **Endnotes:**

- <sup>1</sup> John Niven, *Salmon P. Chase: A Biography* (New York, 1995), p. 5; Frederick J. Blue, *Salmon P. Chase: A Life in Politics* (Kent, Ohio, 1987), p. 1; J. W. Schuckers, *The Life and Public Services of Salmon Portland Chase* (New York, 1970), p. 1.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 15-16; John Niven, *Salmon P. Chase: A Biography* (New York, 1995), pp. 9-14; Frederick J. Blue, *Salmon P. Chase: A Life in Politics* (Kent, Ohio, 1987), pp. 3-5.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7; John Niven, *Salmon P. Chase: A Biography* (New York, 1995), pp. 16-19; J. W. Schuckers, *The Life and Public Services of Salmon Portland Chase* (New York, 1970), pp. 19-21.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 26-30; John Niven, *Salmon P. Chase: A Biography* (New York, 1995), pp. 22-24, 27; Frederick J. Blue, *Salmon P. Chase: A Life in Politics* (Kent, Ohio, 1987), pp. 8-11; Albert Bushnell Hart, *Salmon P. Chase* (New York, 1980), p. 12; John Niven, ed., *The Salmon P. Chase Papers: Journals, 1829-1872*, vol. 1 (Kent, Ohio, 1993), p. 30.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53; John Niven, *Salmon P. Chase: A Biography* (New York, 1995), p. 31; J. W. Schuckers, *The Life and Public Services of Salmon Portland Chase* (New York, 1970), p. 31; Albert Bushnell Hart, *Salmon P. Chase* (New York, 1980), pp. 13, 16.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17; John Niven, ed., *The Salmon P. Chase Papers: Journals, 1829-1872*, vol. 1 (Kent, Ohio, 1993), p. 53; Frederick J. Blue, *Salmon P. Chase: A Life in Politics* (Kent, Ohio, 1987), pp. 17, 21-22; John Niven, *Salmon P. Chase: A Biography* (New York, 1995), pp. 31-32, 205, 488-489; Lewis Alexander Leonard, ed., *Greater Cincinnati and Its People: A History*, vol. 2 (Chicago, Illinois, 1927), pp. 734-736; Charles Theodore Greve, *Centennial History of Cincinnati and Representative Citizens*, vol. 2 (Chicago, Illinois, 1904), pp. 18-19; Cincinnati Historical Society, *The WPA Guide to Cincinnati* (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1987), p. 159; Robinson & Fairbank, *The Cincinnati Directory for the Year 1831* (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1831), p. 32; *Daily Cincinnati Gazette*, September 27, 1830; E. Deming, *Cincinnati Directory Advertiser for 1834* (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1834), p.34; R. P. Brooks, *Cincinnati Business Directory for the Year 1844* (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1844), p.70; C.S. Williams, *Williams' Cincinnati Directory, City Guide and Business Mirror for 1848/49* (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1849), p.59; C.S. Williams, *Williams' Cincinnati Directory, City Guide and Business Mirror for 1856* (Cincinnati, Ohio, 1856), p.51.
- <sup>7</sup> John Niven, *Salmon P. Chase: A Biography* (New York, 1995), pp. 37-38; J. W. Schuckers, *The Life and Public Services of Salmon Portland Chase* (New York, 1970), pp. 34-37; Frederick J. Blue, *Salmon P. Chase: A Life in Politics* (Kent, Ohio, 1987), pp. 19-20.
- <sup>8</sup> John Niven, *Salmon P. Chase: A Biography* (New York, 1995), pp. 50-55, 78-79, 464-465; J. W. Schuckers, *The Life and Public Services of Salmon Portland Chase* (New York, 1970), pp. 39-43, 46-47; John Niven, ed., *The Salmon P. Chase Papers: Correspondence, 1823-1857*, vol. 2 (Kent, Ohio, 1994), pp. 62-63, 90-93.
- <sup>9</sup> John Niven, *Salmon P. Chase: A Biography* (New York, 1995), pp. 58-59, 465-466; Frederick J. Blue, *Salmon P. Chase: A Life in Politics* (Kent, Ohio, 1987), pp. 42-45, 330-333.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47, 332-333; John Niven, *Salmon P. Chase: A Biography* (New York, 1995), pp. 73-74; J. W. Schuckers, *The Life and Public Services of Salmon Portland Chase* (New York, 1970), pp. 47-48; Albert Bushnell Hart, *Salmon P. Chase* (New York, 1980), pp. 90-91.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 96-101; John Niven, *Salmon P. Chase: A Biography* (New York, 1995), pp. 106-107, 110-111, 114-115; Frederick J. Blue, *Salmon P. Chase: A Life in Politics* (Kent, Ohio, 1987), pp. 58-61, 100-101; John Niven, ed., *The Salmon P. Chase Papers: Journals, 1829-1872*, vol. 1 (Kent, Ohio, 1993), p. xxiv-xxvii.
- <sup>12</sup> John Niven, *Salmon P. Chase: A Biography* (New York, 1995), pp. 122-123, 154-155; J. W. Schuckers, *The Life and Public Services of Salmon Portland Chase* (New York, 1970), pp. 105, 162; United States House of Representatives, Office of the Clerk, *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress: 1774-Present* (Washington, D.C., 2001).
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*; John Niven, *Salmon P. Chase: A Biography* (New York, 1995), pp. 176-181, 200-201; J. W. Schuckers, *The Life and Public Services of Salmon Portland Chase* (New York, 1970), pp. 168-169, 188-189; Frederick J. Blue, *Salmon P. Chase: A Life in Politics* (Kent, Ohio, 1987), pp. 102-103, 110-111; John Niven, ed., *The Salmon P. Chase Papers: Journals, 1829-1872*, vol. 1 (Kent, Ohio, 1993), pp. xxviii-xxix; Ohio Historical Society, *The Governors of Ohio* (Columbus, Ohio, 1954), "Salmon P. Chase"; Malcolm Moos, *The Republicans: A History of Their Party* (New York, 1956), pp. 37, 41.
- <sup>14</sup> John Niven, *Salmon P. Chase: A Biography* (New York, 1995), pp. 212-213; J. W. Schuckers, *The Life and Public Services of Salmon Portland Chase* (New York, 1970), p. 207; Frederick J. Blue, *Salmon P. Chase: A Life in Politics* (Kent, Ohio, 1987), pp. 122-123; United States House of Representatives, Office of the Clerk, *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress: 1774-Present* (Washington, D.C., 2001).
- <sup>15</sup> J. W. Schuckers, *The Life and Public Services of Salmon Portland Chase* (New York, 1970), pp. 207-208; Frederick J. Blue, *Salmon P. Chase: A Life in Politics* (Kent, Ohio, 1987), pp. 132-133.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 163-164; J. W. Schuckers, *The Life and Public Services of Salmon Portland Chase* (New York, 1970), pp. 314-317; Albert Bushnell Hart, *Salmon P. Chase* (New York, 1980), pp. 238-241; Department of the Treasury, Office of the Curator, *Secretary of the Treasury Portrait Collection List: Salmon P. Chase* (Washington, D.C., 2000); Robert Stanley, *Dimensions of Law in the Service of Order: Origins of the Federal Income Tax 1861-1913* (New York, 1993), pp. 27-30; Gerald Carson, *The Golden Egg: The Personal Income Tax, Where It Came From, How It Grew* (Boston, Massachusetts,

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- <sup>17</sup> Frederick J. Blue, *Salmon P. Chase: A Life in Politics* (Kent, Ohio, 1987), pp. 150-155, 158-163; John Niven, *Salmon P. Chase: A Biography* (New York, 1995), pp. 264-265, 296-301; Department of the Treasury, Office of the Curator, *Secretary of the Treasury Portrait Collection List: Salmon P. Chase* (Washington, D.C., 2000).
- <sup>18</sup> Frederick J. Blue, *Salmon P. Chase: A Life in Politics* (Kent, Ohio, 1987), pp. 222-225; John Niven, *Salmon P. Chase: A Biography* (New York, 1995), pp. 360-361; John Niven, ed., *The Salmon P. Chase Papers: Journals, 1829-1872*, vol. 1 (Kent, Ohio, 1993), pp. xl, 468-471.
- <sup>19</sup> J. W. Schuckers, *The Life and Public Services of Salmon Portland Chase* (New York, 1970), pp. 486-487; John Niven, *Salmon P. Chase: A Biography* (New York, 1995), pp. 374-375; John Niven, ed., *The Salmon P. Chase Papers: Correspondence, April 1863-1864*, vol. 4 (Kent, Ohio, 1997), pp. 444-445.
- <sup>20</sup> Frederick J. Blue, *Salmon P. Chase: A Life in Politics* (Kent, Ohio, 1987), pp. 258-259, 268-273; John Niven, *Salmon P. Chase: A Biography* (New York, 1995), pp. 402-409, 436-438.
- <sup>21</sup> Frederick J. Blue, *Salmon P. Chase: A Life in Politics* (Kent, Ohio, 1987), pp. 276-279; J. W. Schuckers, *The Life and Public Services of Salmon Portland Chase* (New York, 1970), pp. 552-557; John Niven, ed., *The Salmon P. Chase Papers: Correspondence, 1865-1873*, vol. 5 (Kent, Ohio, 1998), pp. 188-191.
- <sup>22</sup> Frederick J. Blue, *Salmon P. Chase: A Life in Politics* (Kent, Ohio, 1987), pp. 318-319; J. W. Schuckers, *The Life and Public Services of Salmon Portland Chase* (New York, 1970), pp. 624-625; Spring Grove Cemetery Office, *Records of Burials in Spring Grove Cemetery, Cincinnati, Ohio* (Cincinnati, Ohio, 2002); United States House of Representatives, Office of the Clerk, *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress: 1774-Present* (Washington, D.C., 2001).
- <sup>23</sup> Spring Grove Cemetery Office, *Records of Burials in Spring Grove Cemetery, Cincinnati, Ohio* (Cincinnati, Ohio, 2002); Frederick J. Blue, *Salmon P. Chase: A Life in Politics* (Kent, Ohio, 1987), pp. 208-211, 292-293; John Niven, *Salmon P. Chase: A Biography* (New York, 1995), pp. 340-343; Ohio Historical Society, *The First Ladies of Ohio and the Executive Mansions* (Columbus, Ohio, 1970), "Catherine (Kate) Jane Chase."

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