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Mary Ellen Chase

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About this Person

Born: February 24, 1887 in Blue Hill, Maine, United States
Died: July 28, 1973 in Northampton, Massachusetts, United States
Nationality: American
Updated: Apr. 8, 2002

PERSONAL INFORMATION:

Family: Born February 24, 1887, in Blue Hill, ME; died July 28, 1973; daughter of Edward Everett (a lawyer) and Edith (Lord) Chase.
Education: University of Maine, B.A., 1909; University of Minnesota, M.A., 1918, Ph.D., 1922; graduate study in Germany, 1913, and postdoctoral study in England, 1923-26. **Religion:** Episcopalian. **Avocational Interests:** Gardening and bird study. **Memberships:** Phi Beta Kappa.

CAREER:

University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, instructor, 1918-22, assistant professor of English, 1922-26; Smith College, Northampton, MA, associate professor, 1926-29, professor of English literature, 1929-55, professor emeritus, 1955-73.

AWARDS:

Litt.D. from University of Maine, 1929, Bowdoin College, 1933, Northeastern University, 1948, Smith College, 1949, Wilson College, 1957; L.H.D. from Colby College, 1937; Constance Lindsay Skinner Award, Women's National Book Association, 1956; LL.D. from Goucher College, 1960.

WORKS:

WRITINGS BY THE AUTHOR:

- *His Birthday*, Pilgrim Press (Boston, MA), 1915.
- *The Girl from the Big Horn Country* (juvenile), Page Co., 1916.
- *Virginia of Elk Creek Valley* (juvenile), Page Co., 1917.
- (With Frances K. Del Plaine) *The Art of Narration*, Crofts, 1926.
- *Mary Christmas* (juvenile), Little, Brown, 1926.
- *Uplands* (novel), Little, 1927.
- (Editor with Margaret E. Macgregor) *The Writing of Informal Essays*, Holt, 1928.
- *The Golden Ass and Other Essays*, Holt, 1929.
- *Constructive Theme Writing for College Freshmen*, Henry Holt, 1929, 3rd edition, with Henry W. Sams, published as *Constructive Theme Writing*, Holt, 1957.
- *The Silver Shell* (juvenile), Holt, 1930.
- *A Goodly Heritage* (autobiography), Holt, 1932.
- *Mary Peters* (novel), Macmillan, 1934.
- *Silas Crockett* (novel), Macmillan, 1935.
- *This England*, Macmillan, 1936 (published in England as *In England Now*, Collins, 1937).
- *Dawn in Lyonesse* (novel), Macmillan, 1938.
- *A Goodly Fellowship* (autobiography), Macmillan, 1939.
- *Windswept* (novel), Macmillan, 1941.
- *The Bible and the Common Reader*, Macmillan, 1944, revised edition, 1952.

- *Jonathan Fisher, Maine Parson, 1768-1847* (biography), Macmillan, 1948.
- *The Plum Tree* (novel), Macmillan, 1949.
- *Abby Aldrich Rockefeller*, Macmillan, 1950.
- (Editor) *Readings from the Bible*, Macmillan, 1952.
- *The White Gate*, Norton, 1954.
- (Contributor of regional introduction) *Look at the U.S.A.*, Houghton, 1955.
- *Life and Language in the Old Testament*, Norton, 1955.
- *The Edge of Darkness*, Norton, 1957.
- *Sailing the Seven Seas* (juvenile), Houghton, 1958.
- *Donald McKay and the Clipper Ships* (juvenile biography), Houghton, 1959.
- *The Lovely Ambition* (novel), Norton, 1960.
- *The Fishing Fleets of New England* (juvenile), Houghton, 1961.
- *The Psalms for the Common Reader*, Norton, 1962.
- *The Prophets for the Common Reader*, Norton, 1963.
- *Victoria*, Norton, 1963.
- *Dolly Moses*, Norton, 1963.
- *Richard Mansfield, the Prince of Donkeys*, Norton, 1964.
- *Thomas Hardy from Serial to Novel*, Russell, 1964.
- (Editor with others) *Values in Literature*, Houghton, 1965.
- *A Journey to Boston*, Norton, 1965.
- *The Story of Lighthouses*, Norton, 1965.
- *A Walk on an Iceberg*, Norton, 1966.
- (Compiler) Sarah Orne Jewett, *The Country of the Painted Firs*, F. Watts, 1968.
- (Editor with M. E. MacGregor) *The Writing of Informal Essays*, Books for Libraries, 1970.

Contributor of stories and reviews to newspapers and periodicals, including *New York Times*, *New York Herald Tribune*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Yale Review*.

Sidelights

Miss Chase began writing while in college. The author of over forty titles, she was constantly praised for her wit, human understanding, and scholarship. Lewis Gannet said: "To an extraordinary degree Miss Chase has the true novelist's gift for creating characters, interesting the reader in them, and conveying the conviction that these characters are real people." Speaking of *The Lovely Ambition*, Gannet noted that "sheer joy in living permeates [the novel]. It is a pleasure to read and a pleasure to remember. It leaves a good taste in the mouth." Fanny Butcher believed that "nowadays only the rarest of novels have the quiet acceptance of reality that Miss Chase puts into her pages." William Hogan said of her work: "No violence; no loud noises; no sex or bombast--but a display of craftsmanship that might embarrass a younger generation of novelists if they took time out to read this kind of English prose. . . ."

Dawn in Lyonesse was adapted by Thomas Job for a three-act play.

FURTHER READINGS:

FURTHER READINGS ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

PERIODICALS

- *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, June 19, 1960;
- *New York Herald Tribune Book Review*, June 19, 1960;
- *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 1, 1960;
- *Christian Science Monitor*, October 9, 1963; Perry Dickie Westbrook, *Mary Ellen Chase*, Twayne, 1965; Carolyn Riley, editor, *Contemporary Literary Criticism* Volume II, Gale, 1973.

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