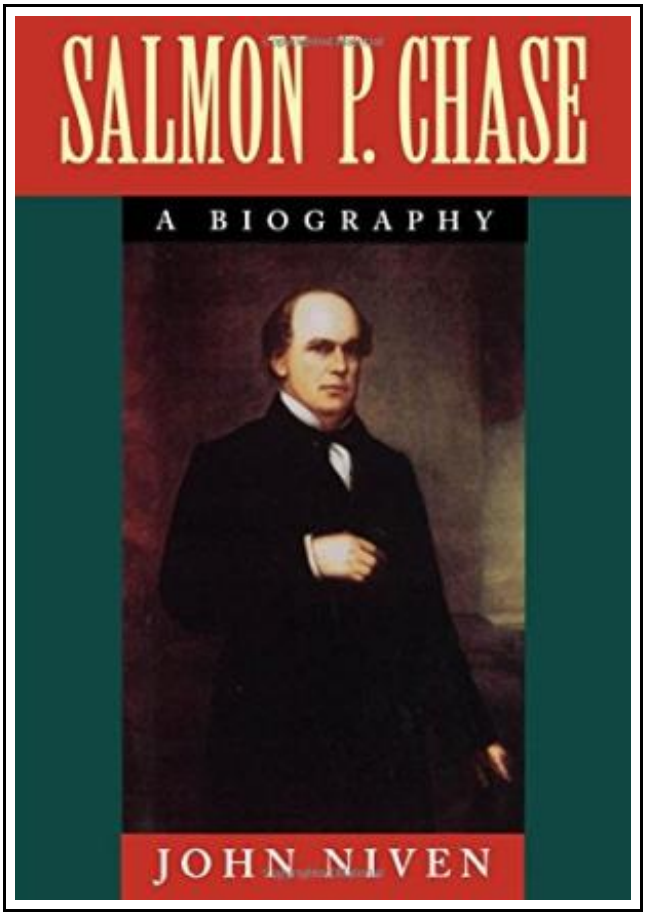
Salmon P. Chase: A Biography



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Oxford University Press, USA. Hardcover. Book Condition: New. This item is printed on demand. Hardcover. 576 pages. Salmon P. Chase was one of the preeminent men of 19th-century America. A majestic figure, tall and stately, Chase was a leader in the fight to end slavery, a brilliant administrator who as Lincolns Secretary of the Treasury provided crucial funding for a vastly expensive war, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court during the turmoil of Reconstruction, and the presiding officer of the impeachment trial of President Andrew Johnson. Yet he was also a complex figure. As John Niven reveals in this magisterial biography, Chase was a paradoxical blend of idealism and ambition. If he stood for the highest moral purposes--the freedom and equality of all mankind--these lofty ideas failed to mask a thirst for power so deeply ingrained in his character that it drove away many who shared his principles, but mistrusted his motives. Niven provides a vivid description of Chases early years--his childhood in New Hampshire (where his fathers failed business venture and early death left the family all but destitute) and in Ohio (where he was sent to live with his uncle Philander, an Episcopal bishop), his education at Dartmouth, and his early law career in Cincinnati. Niven shows how the plight of the slaves stirred this reticent young lawyer, and how Chase gradually moved to the forefront of the antislavery movement. At the same time, we see how he used his growing prominence in the antislavery movement to forward his political ambitions. Niven illuminates Chases long tenure as a public man. Twice elected United States Senator, twice chosen governor of Ohio (then the third most populous state in the Union), Chase organized the widespread but diffuse anti-slavery movement into a workable political organization, the Free Soil party (whose...

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