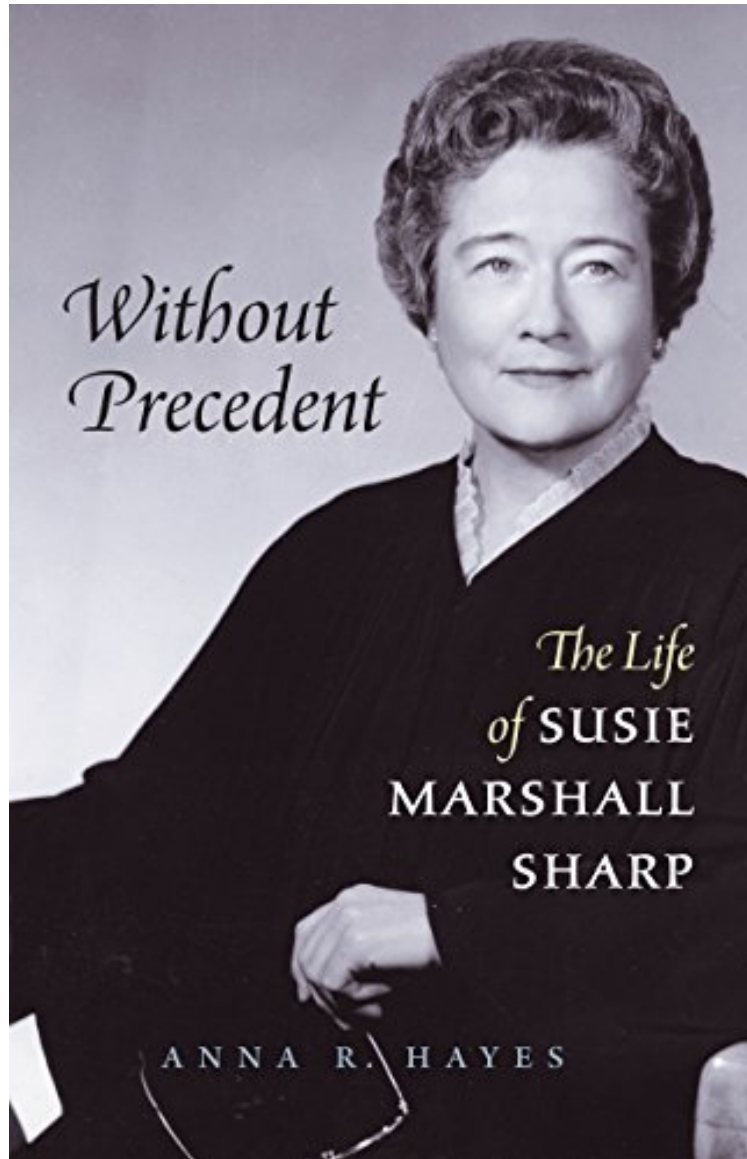


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## Without Precedent: The Life of Susie Marshall Sharp

*Anna R. Hayes*

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**Anna R. Hayes : Without Precedent: The Life of Susie Marshall Sharp** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Without Precedent: The Life of Susie Marshall Sharp:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Impressive biography By Jean This book is not only the biography of Susie Marshall Sharp (1907-1996), the first woman judge in the State of North Carolina and the first woman in the United States to be elected Chief Justice of a State Supreme Court. This book also provides an over view of the history

of North Carolina. Both sides of Susie's family were plantation slave owners prior to the Civil War. They lost almost everything in the Civil War. The book covers briefly both sides of the family's history from the Civil War to the birth of Susie in 1907. Then it covers Susie's life in-depth from birth to death. The author had unrestricted access to Sharp's abundant journals, papers, correspondence both personal and professional. The biggest problem for the author was the diary, notes and journals were all in shorthand. The author had to take Griggs shorthand classes to be able to read the journals. I found the discussion interesting about how every document and letter had to be hand written twice to make the copy in the days before typewriters and carbon paper. Hayes states that Sharp was viewed by her contemporaries as the quintessential spinster, who sacrificed marriage and family for a successful career. Sharp was the eldest child in a very large family and was responsible for helping with the chores and caring for her siblings. She told classmates at University she had all the child care chores she every wanted to do, therefore she planned on never getting married. She was a Southern lady with gracious manners. She was quickly accepted by the men as she never challenged their egos. In today's world she would be classified a racist but she provided equal justice to blacks and whites. Sharp was in the first class at the University of North Carolina Law School after it had modernized its curriculum to the case style of teaching law. She was always in the top percentage of her class. After graduating and passing the bar Susie joined her father in his law practice in 1929. She gradually earned a reputation as a trial lawyer. Her first case as a judge was about what she called cruel and unusual punishment in the local prison. She developed a reputation as an advocate for prison reform. I found this book most interesting not only in learning about some of the history of North Carolina but the history of the role of women in Southern society and in the law. I read this as an e-book via my Kindle app on my iPad. I did enjoy the pictures that were provided in the book. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Rich bio if somewhat too long By Bronx Book Guy Judge Sharp was a pioneer for women in the North Carolina legal world as shown by her being the only woman in her class in law school in the 1920s and being the first woman on the NC court and first woman chief justice of its state supreme court. She was also a complex person, opposing the passage of the ERA, but very concerned with women's role in public life and government. Sharp also shared the racist sentiments of the day, but opposed the KKK and supported the rule of law. She also had a rich, if mostly secret and a tad scandalous, love life. The author as she says is well qualified to write such a book given her own background. The subject is well worth a full length biography. The book as a whole is a good read and you have a rich feel of the time and place. It is fair and provides a balanced account, recognizing the subject had (like all of us) some flaws. My only real complaint is that it probably could have been at least fifty pages shorter. Her life as a judge on the state supreme court comes around half-way thru of a book of over four hundred pages (plus copious notes) and there really isn't so much material to warrant two hundred more pages. Overall though it was an enjoyable book on a subject that I don't recall hearing about until I saw her mentioned by chance. 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Wonderful book By Reader I bought this book because I thoroughly enjoyed reading about the Sharp family in *Bitter Blood* by Jerry Bledsoe. This book was well written; and Judge Sharp is a fascinating woman, making this a five-star read. The book covers her family's life, her own life from beginning to end, her personal life which was a real shocker, and of course her career. It was interesting to see how she broke through so many barriers without even really trying, and the author did an excellent job of explaining how that was the case. I've always admired Judge Sharp from what I knew of her - now I admire her even more.

The first woman judge in the state of North Carolina and the first woman in the United States to be elected chief justice of a state supreme court, Susie Marshall Sharp (1907-1996) broke new ground for women in the legal profession. When she retired in 1979, she left a legacy burnished by her tireless pursuit of lucidity in the law, honesty in judges, and humane conditions in prisons. Anna Hayes presents Sharp's career as an attorney, distinguished judge, and politician within the context of the social mores, the legal profession, and the political battles of her day, illuminated by a careful and revealing examination of Sharp's family background, private life, and personality. Judge Sharp was viewed by contemporaries as the quintessential spinster, who had sacrificed marriage and family life for a successful career. The letters and journals she wrote throughout her life, however, reveal that Sharp led a rich private life in which her love affairs occupied a major place, unsuspected by the public or even her closest friends and family. With unrestricted access to Sharp's abundant journals, papers, and notes, Anna Hayes uncovers the story of a brilliant woman who transcended the limits of her times, who opened the way for women who followed her, and who improved the quality of justice for the citizens of her state. *Without Precedent* also tells the story of a complicated woman, at once deeply conservative and startlingly modern, whose intriguing self-contradictions reflect the complexity of human nature.

Hayes tells [Sharp's] story beautifully.--Greene County Independent [Hayes] holds little back, but does not sensationalize the more startling facets of Sharp's life. . . . Hayes captures a woman who made numerous sacrifices for her career and enjoyed numerous successes.--Salisbury Post It is the complexity of the portrait that makes Hayes' biography fascinating to those who thought they already knew Susie Sharp.--Carolina Alumni Glowing praise may not sufficiently describe the merit of this book and the high standard it sets as an example of how to tell the story of an

important person.--D.G Martin, Raleigh News Observer[An] outstanding and revealing biography. . . . A fascinating account of Sharp's extraordinary professional life. . . . A compelling read, and one that makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of North Carolina in the 20th century and the woman who changed our judiciary forever.--Jack Betts, Charlotte ObserverAn engaging book. . . . Author Anna Hayes is both a historian and a lawyer, which is a winning combination in chronicling the life of one of the most outstanding jurists North Carolina has ever produced.--Charles Blackburn Jr., Our StateA compelling life story that provides a wonderfully intimate view of an important judge. . . . Deserves a lot of credit for a unique approach and diligent research.--North Carolina Historical Hayes demonstrates a passion, respect, and dedication to tell the story of Susie Marshall Sharp in its entirety.--Journal of Southern HistoryExtremely well written and meticulously documented. It presents a vivid portrait of a highly intelligent, courageous woman who braved many personal tragedies while carving a place of honor in the state's judiciary history.--A.C. Snow, Raleigh News ObserverPresents Sharp's career as an attorney, judge and politician within the context of the social mores, the legal profession and political battles of her day, and illuminates it with a revealing examination of Sharp's family background, personality and rich private life.--Carolina Country Susie Sharp was a highly significant figure on the twentieth-century legal landscape, foremost in North Carolina but with national ramifications as well. Anna Hayes's magnum opus fully and accurately depicts the Judge Sharp the North Carolina legal community knew so well, while simultaneously revealing aspects of her life that few, if any, could have imagined. This full-length portrait will be the definitive work on Chief Justice Sharp for a long time to come.--Willis P. Whichard, Associate Justice, Ret., Supreme Court of North CarolinaI could not put this book down. Susie Marshall Sharp's public life makes for an interesting story of feminism, lawyering, education, and party politics. But what is so rare is to find such a well-documented and totally unexpected story of her personal life to go along with the public record. This book works beautifully as a love story(ies), as a history of the courts and legal politics, and as a biography of the fascinating Susie Marshall Sharp.--Glenda Gilmore, author of Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950 and Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920 For those who remember her and for those who do not, Hayes's revealing portrait of the first woman to preside over the North Carolina Supreme Court is a tribute to the author's persistence. Her discovery of documents that unveil the most private dimensions of the life of this very public figure is every biographer's dream. Evenhanded and perceptive, Without Precedent tells us much about a notable woman. In addition, it informs about a wealth of other twentieth-century topics: legal education, the practice of law, party politics, the courts, feminism, North Carolina, and the South.--Jane Sherron De Hart, co-author of Sex, Gender, and the Politics of ERA and author of the forthcoming Ruth Bader Ginsburg Before the Bench This is a remarkable book about a remarkable woman--an honestly written, well-documented account of the groundbreaking life of Susie Sharp, the first woman in the country to be elected chief justice of a state supreme court and one of the most influential North Carolinians--male or female--of the twentieth century. Energetic, free-thinking, politically astute, charmingly attractive, and with confidence in who she was and what she believed, Susie Sharp scaled every obstacle to female advancement in a legal profession dominated by men throughout her career at the bar. Anna Hayes's rich telling of Susie Sharp's personal and professional lives--not always, it seems, in sync--reveals a woman who is as wonderfully human, caring, and sensitive as she is driven, erudite, and ambitious. I greatly enjoyed this book. For those like me who knew, worked with, and admired Chief Justice Sharp in her later years, it will not only evoke fond memories, it will also be full of surprises.--Jim Exum Jr., Chief Justice, Ret., Supreme Court of North CarolinaWithout Precedent is a richly documented, sprightly biography of one of the most significant women in twentieth-century North Carolina. It deserves a wide audience--not only among students of the state, but anyone interested in the life of a woman who succeeded in a male world.--William Link, author of William Friday: Power, Purpose, and American Higher EducationWithout Precedent may not be the book that Anna Hayes expected to write about Susie Marshall Sharp. It is, however, a meticulously researched, beautifully written, and courageous biography of one of the most respected and influential American women of the twentieth century. Drawing upon voluminous resource materials, including Judge Sharp's detailed personal journals and letters, Ms. Hayes tells the story of the life and times of one of North Carolina's most accomplished citizens. From her childhood days in Reidsville, as the oldest child of an attorney, through her retirement from the office of chief justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court, Judge Sharp's unprecedented achievements and the challenges she encountered as a trail blazing woman lawyer, superior court judge, and supreme court justice in the male-dominated legal profession and political arena of her era are expertly chronicled in a nonjudgmental manner. Skillfully woven into this fascinating story are intimate details of Judge Sharp's ambitions, fears, prejudices, insecurities, and yes, the loves of her life. Confronted with Judge Sharp's journals and letters--which revealed a life much more complex than her public persona--Ms. Hayes must have struggled with what to reveal and what to omit. Is this biography an intrusive invasion of the private life of a well respected public figure or a humanizing and inspirational portrait of the Judge? Regardless of how each reader may answer that question, this story of the life of Susie Sharp is a powerful and uplifting reminder that wisdom, intelligence, ability, determination, ambition, compassion, political acumen, and devotion to justice are not gender specific.--E. Garrett Walker, Clerk to Chief Justice Susie Sharp, Supreme Court of North Carolina, fall 1975 to spring 1976About the AuthorAnna R. Hayes is a former partner in the Raleigh, North Carolina, law firm of

Manning, Fulton, and Skinner, P.A. She divides her time between Paris and Chapel Hill.