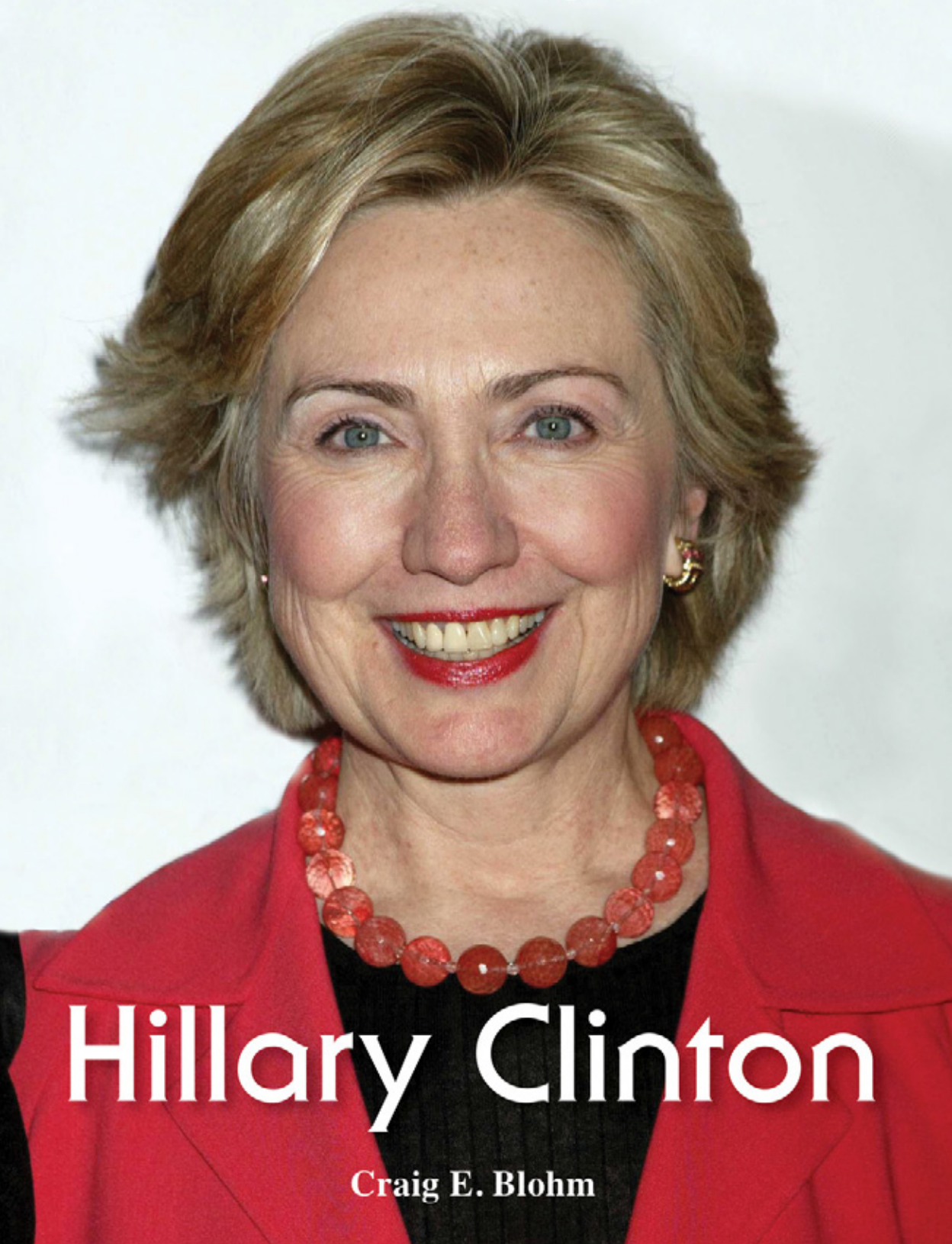


Influential Women



Hillary Clinton

Craig E. Blohm

Contents

Introduction	4
The Many Lives of Hillary Clinton	
Chapter One	8
Hillary Growing Up	
Chapter Two	19
Wellesley, Yale, and Bill Clinton	
Chapter Three	31
First Lady Hillary	
Chapter Four	43
Senator Clinton	
Chapter Five	54
Running for the White House	
Source Notes	66
Important Events in the Life of Hillary Clinton	71
For Further Research	73
Index	75
Picture Credits	79
About the Author	80

Introduction

The Many Lives of Hillary Clinton

History textbooks are filled with stories of courageous Americans fighting for freedom and democracy, exploring strange and unknown places, and challenging the boundaries of science, technology, and physical endurance. For much of American history, these stories featured men exclusively. In the thirteen colonies and the new nation formed from them, only men could vote or hold office. Women have had to fight for their place as citizens, gaining the right to vote only after the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1920.

Many women have overcome the culture of gender inequality to make important contributions to society. These contributions include numerous firsts. Belle Babb Mansfield became the first woman lawyer in America, passing the Iowa bar in 1869. In 1932 Hattie Caraway was the first woman to be elected to the US Senate. And in 1997 Madeleine Albright became the first woman appointed secretary of state of the United States. In the twenty-first century, one woman who had already become a lawyer, a senator, and a secretary of state sought to claim another first: the first female president of the United States. That woman was Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Hillary's Early Years

Born of middle-class parents in middle America, Hillary Rodham grew up in the 1950s, a time of peace and prosperity. She was a bright student who could never quite live up to her father's expectations of excellence. She recalls, "My father would come home and say, 'You did well, but could you do better? It's hard out there.'"¹ Hillary did not

let the fact that she was a girl limit her potential. She worked hard in school and developed a keen sense of competitiveness.

As the comfortable fifties transformed into the turbulent sixties, Hillary also underwent a change. In 1962 she went to Chicago with her church youth group to hear a speech by Martin Luther King Jr. For the first time Hillary became aware of the problem of race in America. Her awareness of social causes grew throughout high school and college, as did her intellect, her idealism, and her ambition. After college she attended Yale Law School, where she met a student from Arkansas named Bill Clinton. They married in 1975 and moved to Little Rock, Arkansas, where she joined the prestigious Rose Law Firm and eventually became the firm's first woman partner.

“My father would come home and say, ‘You did well, but could you do better? It’s hard out there.’”¹

—Hillary Clinton.

First Lady Hillary

Hillary was thrust into the world of politics when Bill was elected governor of Arkansas in 1978. In her role as First Lady of Arkansas, Hillary worked to improve health care for the poor and reform the state's educational system. In the middle of his fifth term as Arkansas governor, Bill was nominated as the Democratic candidate for president of the United States in 1992. Hillary was now in the national spotlight, and her personal and professional life came under intense public scrutiny. During the campaign, the press investigated investments Hillary had made while at Rose Law. Hints that Bill had engaged in extramarital affairs started appearing in tabloid newspapers. Hillary defended herself, and her husband, against those who tried to derail the Clinton campaign. Bill won the election, and Hillary became America's First Lady.

Controversy followed Hillary to the White House. During the campaign, Bill had promised Americans that “when you vote for Bill Clinton, you get two for the price of one,”² envisioning Hillary as his partner in the Oval Office. Once Bill was elected, however, many people became critical of Hillary's active role in the Clinton presidency. Her proposal for a new system of health care reform failed to win the support of Congress and was abandoned. The suicide of a



Hillary Clinton campaigns in New Hampshire in 2015. Clinton—former First Lady, former New York senator, and former secretary of state—hopes to add another title to her resume: President of the United States.

former Rose Law coworker, Bill's affair with a White House intern, and accounts of Hillary's often volatile temper all combined to tarnish her self-controlled public persona. Despite the vindictiveness of her detractors, however, Hillary actually gained sympathy for enduring Bill's indiscretions.

When the Clinton presidency ended in 2001, no one would have blamed Hillary if she had decided to put the world of politics far behind her. But her ambition would not allow her to retreat from public life.

Senator Clinton

That same year, Hillary Clinton became the first former First Lady to be elected to the US Senate. As a senator from New York, she helped citizens of her new home state in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attacks. She voted in favor of the US invasion of Iraq. She visited US troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, and she voted to help banks during the economic crisis of the late 2000s. With her rising popularity and increasing foreign policy experience, Clinton decided to take the ultimate step: a run for the presidency.

Clinton announced her candidacy in January 2007. During the primary campaign that would decide who the Democratic nominee for president would be, Clinton was opposed by several other candidates, among them Senator Barack Obama of Illinois. With the field finally narrowed down to Clinton and Obama, Clinton lost the nomination to the man who would become the nation's first African American president. Shortly after being elected, Obama asked Clinton to be his secretary of state, a position of global importance. Clinton accepted, and she began her new job on January 22, 2009. She served in the position until 2013.

“I’m running for president. . . . Everyday Americans need a champion. And I want to be that champion. So I’m hitting the road to earn your vote—because it’s your time. And I hope you’ll join me on this journey.”³

—Hillary Clinton.

A Second Campaign

With her experience as a senator and secretary of state, Clinton once more decided to run for president. On April 12, 2015, she announced a new bid for the White House. In a two-minute video, she declared, “I’m running for president. . . . Everyday Americans need a champion. And I want to be that champion. So I’m hitting the road to earn your vote—because it’s your time. And I hope you’ll join me on this journey.”³ That journey, wherever it takes her, will be a historic one for Hillary Clinton and the capstone of her long and influential career in public service.

Hillary's Alaskan Adventure

Hillary Clinton has accumulated vast experience in her jobs as a lawyer, senator, and secretary of state. But her most unusual job experience did not take place in the courtroom or the halls of Congress, but in the wilds of Alaska.

Clinton graduated from Wellesley in May 1969. Seeking a break from four years of study and student activities, she spent that summer working her way across Alaska. First she washed dishes at Mount McKinley National Park, then “slimed” fish at a salmon factory in Valdez. It was far from glamorous work, as Clinton recalls in her memoir, *Living History*.

My job required me to wear knee-high boots and stand in bloody water while removing guts from the salmon with a spoon. When I didn't slime fast enough, the supervisors yelled at me to speed up. Then I was moved to the assembly packing line, where I helped pack salmon in boxes for shipping to the large processing plant offshore. I noticed that some of the fish looked bad. When I told the manager, he fired me and told me to come back the next afternoon to pick up my last check. When I showed up, the entire operation was gone. During a visit to Alaska when I was First Lady, I joked to an audience that of all the jobs I've had, sliming fish was pretty good preparation for life in Washington.

Hillary Rodham Clinton, *Living History*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003, pp. 42-43.

She applied to several law schools and was ultimately accepted by both Harvard and Yale. While deliberating about which school to choose, Hillary was invited to a Harvard Law School party. When she told a professor that she was having a hard time choosing between Harvard or its closest competitor, Yale, the man replied, “Well, first of all, we don't have any close competitors. Secondly, we don't need any more women.”³⁵ With that remark, Hillary's decision was made: She would go to Yale.

Source Notes

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3. Quoted in Amy Chozik, “Hillary Clinton Announces 2016 Presidential Bid,” *New York Times*, April 12, 2015. www.nytimes.com.

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4. Quoted in Donnie Radcliffe, *Hillary Rodham Clinton: A First Lady for Our Time*. New York: Warner, 1993, p. 42.
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7. Quoted in Carl Bernstein, *A Woman in Charge: The Life of Hillary Rodham Clinton*. New York: Knopf, 2007, p. 20.
8. Quoted in Joyce Milton, *The First Partner, Hillary Rodham Clinton*. New York: Morrow, 1999, p. 13.
9. Clinton, *Living History*, p. 11.
10. Quoted in Matt Hickman, “10 Famous Former Girl Scouts,” Mother Nature Network, February 19, 2013. www.mnn.com.
11. Quoted in King, *The Woman in the White House*, p. 11.
12. Quoted in Cynthia Hanson, “I Was a Teenage Republican,” *Chicago*, September 1994. www.chicagomag.com.
13. Hillary Rodham Clinton, *It Takes a Village*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996, p. 171.

Important Events in the Life of Hillary Clinton

1947

Hillary Rodham is born on October 26 in Chicago, Illinois.

1962

With her church youth group, Hillary attends a speech given by Martin Luther King Jr. in Chicago; she is inspired by King's words.

1965

Hillary enters Wellesley College in Massachusetts.

1969

Wellesley invites its student body president, Hillary Rodham, to give a commencement address—a first for the college.

1971

Hillary Rodham meets fellow Yale Law School student Bill Clinton.

1975

The couple marries in Little Rock, Arkansas.

1976

Clinton joins the prestigious Rose Law Firm.

1980

Daughter Chelsea Victoria Clinton is born on February 27.

1983

Clinton is appointed head of the Arkansas Education Standards Committee.

For Further Research

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Index

Note: Boldface page numbers indicate illustrations.

- Albright, Madeleine, 4
Alinsky, Saul, 25
Arafat, Suha, 45–46
Arafat, Yasser, 46
Arkansas Education Standards Committee, 35
- Baker, Jerry, 18
Benghazi terrorist attack (Libya, 2012), 63
Bernstein, Carl, 28, 33, 38
Bill, Hillary & Chelsea Clinton Foundation, 63
bin Laden, Osama, 50
Branson, Johanna, 22–23
Brooke, Edward, 27
Bush, George H.W., 38
Bush, George W., 42, 49
- Caraway, Hattie, 4
Carlson, Paul, 17
Chafe, William H., 30, 34
Clinton, Bill, 5
 on campaign trail, **38**
 elected governor of Arkansas, 33
 impeachment of, 42
 Lewinsky scandal and, 40–41
 meets Hillary, 29–30
 presidential campaign of, 36–38
 at Yale Law School, **29**
Clinton, Chelsea Victoria, 35, **35**, 47, 48
 birth of, 34
Clinton, Hillary Rodham, **6**
 announces candidacy for 2016 presidential election, 62
 with Bill and Chelsea, **35**
 on campaign trail with Bill, **38**
 commencement speech at Wellesley by, 27
 early life of, 4–5, 10–12
 e-mail controversy and, 64–65
 as First Lady of Arkansas, 5, 33–35
 health care reform efforts of, 38–39
 on her father, 5
 important events in life of, 71–72
 on job in Alaska salmon factory, 26
 marriage of, 31