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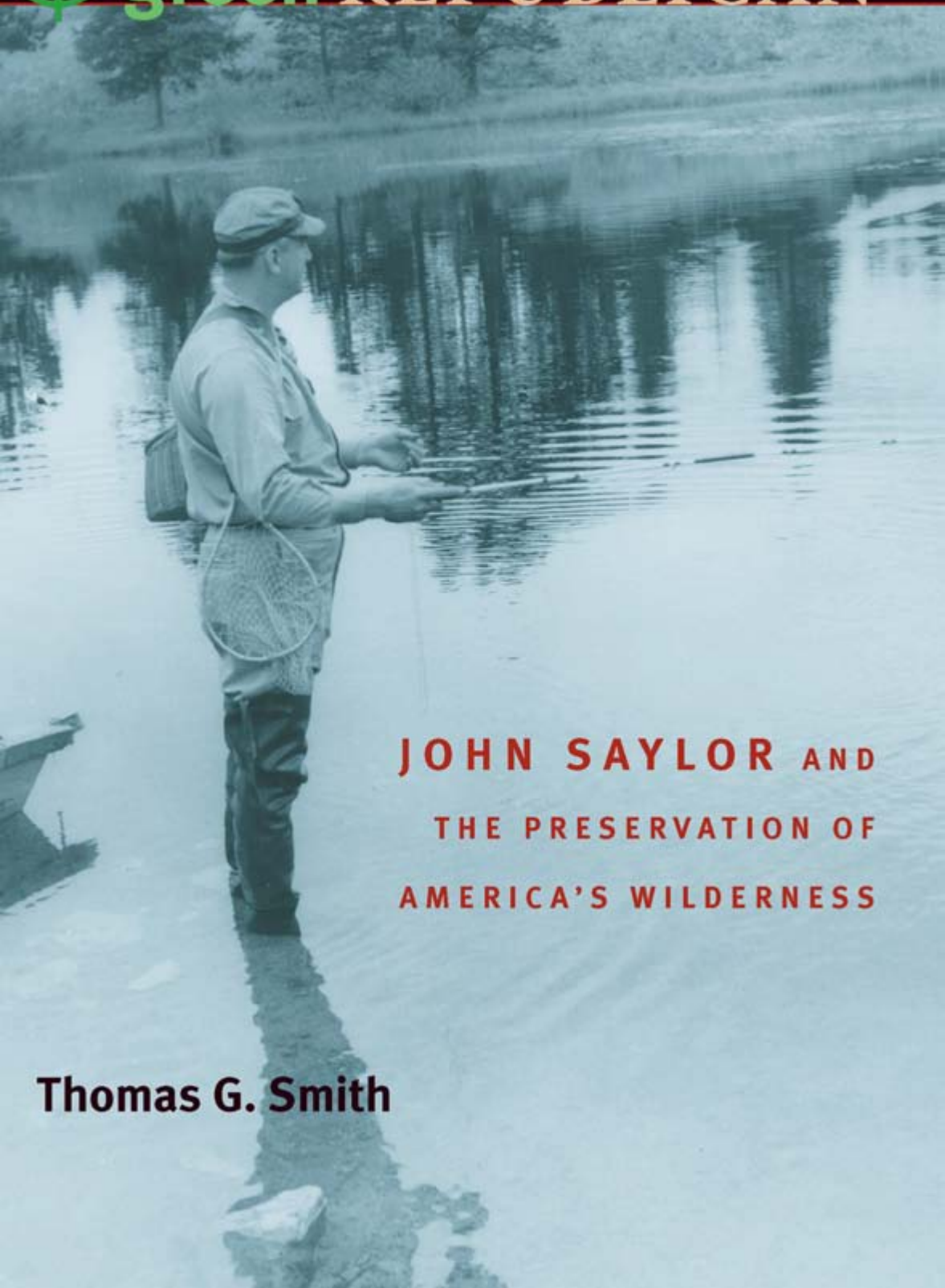

JOHN SAYLOR AND THE PRESERVATION OF AMERICA'S WILDERNESS

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for Sandra

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As most writers realize, librarians are national treasures. From Boston to San Francisco, the archivists with whom I worked were gracious and knowledgeable. Phil Zorich and his successor, Theresa McDevitt, who now heads Special Collections at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, where the Saylor Papers are housed, could not have been more gracious or accommodating. Although I am sure I tried their patience, Jim Douglas and Laura Robinson at the Nichols College Library never balked at my requests for material, and Jim helped me with computer issues. Other archivists, too numerous to mention here, also helped guide my research.

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green REPUBLICAN

Trailblazer

Some readers may consider the title of this book, *Green Republican,* a contradiction in terms. In recent history, the Republican Party has (probably fairly) gained a reputation for putting economic development far ahead of environmental issues. But the Republican Party, as historians and other observers have noted, has a rich conservation tradition. At the turn of the twentieth century, President Theodore Roosevelt championed the wise use of natural resources, rather than their plunder. Through executive action, the Roosevelt administration set aside wildlife refuges and millions of acres of timberland as national forests and promoted aesthetic conservation by preserving natural scenic treasures such as Grand Canyon. John Saylor, a congressman representing a western Pennsylvania coal-mining district from 1949 to 1973, built upon this earlier Republican legacy.[1]

John Saylor was an exceptional member of Congress who championed conservation and environmental initiatives during the three decades following World War II. He was far more vigorous in his support for national parks, wilderness, and environmental protection than most of his congressional colleagues. Indeed, Saylor was one of the most important environmentalists of his generation and the leading conservationist in Congress in the twentieth century. Morris Udall (D-AZ), Frank Church (D-ID), Henry "Scoop" Jackson (D-WA), and Clinton Anderson (D-NM) also established strong records, but they lacked Saylor's pioneering spirit and commitment to the cause.

Saylor believed that once national parks and monuments had been established, they became sacrosanct. During the 1950s and 1960s, when federal dam building flourished, he helped block proposals by the powerful Bureau of Reclamation to build dams in Dinosaur National Monument and Grand Canyon. He was also a fervid protector of wilderness areas. In the House of Representatives, he was the driving force behind legislation establishing the National Wilderness Preservation System in 1964 and the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System of 1968. Known as a maverick and pioneer, he battled for national parks and wilderness at a time when such positions were unpopular.[2]

Several factors shaped Saylor's evolution as an environmental activist. His parents instilled in him a love of nature, John inheriting from his father a passion for hunting and angling. They also provided him with a strong religious base that emphasized earth stewardship. America's natural wonders, he once said, stood "as special monuments to the Divine Being": "To permit the despoilment of our natural resources would be to desecrate a divine inheritance. It is thus incumbent upon us to make provisions . . . to safeguard for succeeding generations the natural endowments that are our trust." Protecting natural splendors, he believed, would bring present and future generations closer to the Creator.[3]

A World War II veteran, Saylor was intensely nationalistic and patriotic. He believed that America's sublime landscapes, especially its national parks, glorified the country's people, as well as God. A 1950 *New York Times* editorial reflected his sentiments, he said, when it spoke of the national parks as the citizenry's wisest investment: "It is an investment in health, recreation, education and in something as simple and as profound as love of country—love of the unique and wonderful natural fabric that is the foundation of America." This equation of patriotism and conservation was a pillar of Saylor's perspective. He was unstinting in his support of wilderness preservation, believing that the noted historian Frederick Jackson Turner was right when he asserted in the early 1890s that America's distinct democratic, enterprising, individualistic spirit had been shaped by the wilderness experience. Because wilderness had helped forge the American identity, large tracts should be preserved to inspire future generations.[4]

Like many wilderness advocates of his era, Saylor viewed wilderness as an uninhabited and untamed natural landscape, downplaying or ignoring the fact that Native Americans had earlier inhabited and abandoned these wild areas. Indeed, as historian Mark Spence has shown, in creating some of the earliest

national parks, such as Yellowstone, federal officials dispossessed Native people so that the reserves would be more "wild." Saylor, although typical of his time in insisting that new parks and wilderness areas be uninhabited, did not advocate the dispossession of Native Americans.[5]

Theodore Roosevelt served as Saylor's political and environmental hero. Like Roosevelt, Saylor sought as a policy maker to strike a balance between the use and the preservation of federally controlled natural resources, insisting that the two goals were not inherently in conflict: "Through wise planning and use we can both preserve and develop. The problem with which we are faced is, of course, how to achieve the requisite planning and proper use for the greatest benefit." Too often, he maintained, federal planners slighted the goal of preservation.[6]

Saylor took a proprietary interest in public lands. Though located mainly in the West, these 750 million acres, he insisted, belonged to the American people, not just to the residents of the states where the lands were located. Given constitutional authority to make laws and regulations relating to these lands, Congress, he said, should act in the national interest. Representatives should not allow the public domain in the West to be ravaged as it had been in the East. Paved roads, commercial enterprises, cities, and modern conveniences are "good," he once said, "but they are not good enough." Americans also need natural landscapes for beauty, inspiration, and solitude; consequently, large tracts of unspoiled Western terrain should be preserved for aesthetic and recreational purposes.[7]

Early in his career, Saylor had some encounters with nature that reinforced his commitment to the protection of national parks and wilderness areas. His most enriching experience occurred in 1953 when he visited Dinosaur National Monument on the Colorado-Utah border. After rafting down the Yampa and Green rivers, he became convinced that a proposed federal dam would desecrate "one of the most impressive wilderness areas in all the world . . . with its tremendous canyons of unparalleled beauty." At the conclusion of that raft trip, river guide Bus Hatch informed the Sierra Club's David Brower: "I think Congressman Saylor is going to help us out." As Brower later recalled, "Never did the word 'help' have so much territory to cover as in what was about to be done to save rivers, national parks, wilderness, and an over-all sane view towards a beautiful planet." Saylor thus helped save the Dinosaur canyons and several other primeval landscapes.[8] Over the next two decades, Saylor acted as a towering figure in environmental policy making. He could be intimidating:

he was blunt, forceful and—at six feet, four inches—physically imposing. But he was also well liked and respected on both sides of the aisle as an affable, hardworking congressman who was knowledgeable about environmental issues. Generally bipartisan, he worked comfortably with Democrats and Republicans, conservatives and liberals, and was adept at compromise and coalition building.[9]

Throughout his legislative career, Saylor served on the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs. This committee, dominated by Westerners, held jurisdiction over legislation relating to Native Americans, public lands, conservation, national parks, and irrigation. During the 1960s and early 1970s, Saylor, as the ranking minority member on the committee, wielded great influence. During this time period, as political scientist Richard F. Fenno has observed, regional differences outweighed party affiliation on the committee. Even though Saylor was one of the few Easterners on the committee, Westerners were forced to cooperate with him because they were vastly outnumbered on the House floor. If Saylor opposed a committee bill, he could round up enough Republican and non-Western votes on the floor to kill it.[10]

Since there were no Native Americans, federal lands, or national parks in his district, Saylor could generally vote his conscience on environmental legislation. "Of course," as one former legislator observed, "every Congressman likes to vote his convictions when he can, but he also wants to keep his seat." Thus, like all successful politicians, Saylor also worked diligently to retain his position.[11]

As the representative of a major coal-producing area, he had to balance his concern for wilderness and the environment with his goal of protecting the economic livelihood of his constituents. Fortunately for Saylor, preservation concerns at large often coincided with interests at home. He opposed federal hydroelectric and atomic power plants, in large measure, because they competed with coal as an energy source, referring to them as "miner displacement programs." In 1962 alone, he pointed out, the Bureau of Reclamation built hydroelectric plants that produced 1.8 million kilowatts of electricity: "As a consequence, the coal industry will lose about 6 million tons of business, with a wage loss of $12 million to miners." The industry was further injured by public power plants constructed by the Army Corps of Engineers and the Atomic Energy Commission. Saylor, a Westerner grumbled, "is against hydropower dams as much as a man can be. He is against them 24 hours a day, seven days a week, forever and ever. He is against hydropower dams because they os-

tensibly do violence to pretty canyons. But he also is against them because they allegedly compete with coal-fired electric plants fed by his state's coal diggers who live in his district. And he would not be much of a congressman if he was any other way either."[12]

Nevertheless, while Saylor was a fervent defender of coal and private power, his environmental activism went far beyond the narrow scope of his district. He loved the rugged outdoors and was passionate about defending national parks, preserving wilderness, and protecting the environment. He supported air and water quality legislation even though it proved burdensome to the coal, steel, and utility industries. In short, Saylor's environmentalism was genuine, rooted in his patriotism, his religion, and his upbringing.

In spite of his membership in the Republican Party, Saylor's commitment to the cause was seldom, if ever, doubted by conservation leaders, who developed a friendly working relationship with him. He was especially close with Joe Penfold of the Izaak Walton League, Charles Callison of the National Wildlife Federation and later the Audubon Society, Howard Zahniser of the Wilderness Society, and David Brower of the Sierra Club. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, Saylor also built a trusting relationship with Stewart Brandborg and Michael McCloskey, who succeeded Zahniser and Brower in leadership positions with the Wilderness Society and the Sierra Club. Saylor communicated with these individuals, read their organizations' publications, and rarely departed from the positions they took. Indeed, national conservation leaders often met in Saylor's office: "People would leave messages there for us, we would leave them for others, and we would get news and advice from Mr. Saylor's top assistants, Ann Dunbar . . . and Harry Fox," Brower recalled. "Then Coach Saylor would come in and we would talk about our plans and hopes and learn of his, and why ours might or might not work. There is nothing uncommon about this relationship," he continued, "but it becomes extraordinary when it goes on for two decades, and when you count up the conservation victories that simply would not have happened without the counsel, encouragement, and loving kindness . . . that John Saylor gave."[13]

While this book carries no political agenda, it is difficult to resist speculating on how Saylor would view the modern conservation movement. He most assuredly would be displeased with the degree of rancor and partisanship that has beset congressional discourse. He would certainly berate zealous environmentalists who engage in monkey wrenching and other acts of eco-violence. And he would be disenchanted with his party's environmental record over the

past three decades. He decried the lack of funding for the National Park Service as a member of Congress, deplored attempted raids on the national parks by timber companies, and opposed drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge during the energy crisis of the early 1970s; it is safe to assume he would probably maintain these positions today. Above all, he would no doubt encourage Democrats and Republicans to put aside party differences and work to protect the national park system, wilderness, and the planet. And he would be pleased if Democrats and Republicans alike took inspiration from his environmental record.

one
Headwaters

A WEATHERED METAL SIGN depicting grazing livestock marked the dirt road to Bellevue Farm in the elegant horse and cattle country of northern Virginia. A stocky, eighty-seven-year-old man with lush white hair emerged from the ranch house to greet the visitor and direct him to the garage. The inside of the building was empty except for the walls, which were covered with framed photographs of prominent political personalities of the 1950s and 1960s. "This is my rogue's gallery, and here is the chief rogue," declared Floyd Dominy, pointing to Republican representative John P. Saylor of Pennsylvania. The picture featured a smiling Saylor holding a clenched fist in Dominy's face. That image, Dominy recalled, perfectly captured Saylor's "bombast and amicable nature." Unlike some leading conservationists of the day, Dominy observed, Saylor was "earthy, unsanctimonious, likable, and a real man" who liked to hunt and fish. While good-natured, Saylor was also strong in his convictions and impossible to bully.[1]

During the 1950s and 1960s, Dominy and Saylor represented opposite positions in the American conservation movement. As head of the Interior Department's Bureau of Reclamation, Dominy generally favored the development of public resources, especially federally constructed hydroelectric dams on Western rivers. Saylor, on the other hand, championed the inviolability of the national park system, the preservation of wilderness, and the protection of the environment, long before any of these causes became fashionable. From the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s, he was the preeminent preservationist in the House

of Representatives and probably all of Congress. And since his death in 1973, perhaps no national legislator—and certainly no Republican—has been so avid and active in the pursuit of earth stewardship.

John Phillips Saylor was born on July 23, 1908, on a farm in Conemaugh Township, about five miles outside Johnstown, Pennsylvania. His persecuted English Mennonite forebears, led by Christian Saylor, had migrated to Philadelphia by way of Switzerland in 1684, three years after the establishment of William Penn's colony. Over the centuries, the family sprawled out geographically until by the mid–nineteenth century it had reached Johnstown in western Pennsylvania.[2]

Located in Cambria County about sixty miles east of Pittsburgh, Johnstown is nestled at the foot of the Laurel Highlands region of the Allegheny Mountains. Three rivers converge there in the shape of a lazy Y. The Little Conemaugh River tumbles down the steep hillside from the northwest, while the Stony Creek River descends from the northeast. The junction of these two streams forms the Conemaugh River, which stretches southwest to form the tail of the Y. Downtown Johnstown is laid out in the wedge-shaped area between the two upper rivers.

Johnstown's natural setting proved a blessing and a curse. The surrounding mountainsides brimmed with ore deposits, and the area became a center for the coal, iron, and steel industries. The Cambria Iron Company was established along the Conemaugh River in 1852, and under subsequent organizational entities—Cambria Steel Works (1898), Midvale Steel and Ordnance (1916), and Bethlehem Steel—it served as the major industry in the region for more than a century. Bethlehem operated the mills in Johnstown from 1923 until the mid-1980s.[3]

While the rivers supplied water for industrial, household, and recreational use, however, they also made the city prone to floods. On the afternoon of May 31, 1889, the earthen South Fork Dam fourteen miles up the Little Conemaugh River crumbled, sending a torrent of water hurtling through Johnstown. Homes and businesses were flattened, and more than twenty-two hundred people died. Nonetheless, the three decades after the infamous Johnstown flood were characterized by economic growth for the steel industry and general prosperity for the city.[4]

John Saylor's antecedents were among the flood's fortunate survivors. John Phillips, Saylor's maternal grandfather, was a miner, and his paternal grand-

father, also named John Saylor, worked at the Cambria Iron Company. Neither lost his home or any loved ones. Saylor's parents, Tillman and Minerva Phillips Saylor, of English stock, were teenagers during the flood. Born in Johnstown, they both graduated from Johnstown High School and went on to college, Tillman attending the Indiana Normal School (now Indiana University of Pennsylvania) and Minerva the Millersville Normal School (now Millersville University of Pennsylvania). After graduating, both became teachers in Johnstown area schools, where they met. Tillman aspired to become an attorney, eventually attending the University of Michigan Law School and returning to Johnstown after graduation in 1904 to start a law practice. Three years later, he married Minerva Phillips. Minerva was a highly intelligent woman who relished teaching, but following the custom of the times, she gave up her career to raise a family. Besides the oldest child, John, the marriage produced Anna Catherine (1911), Margaret (1914), and Tillman Jr. (1917).[5]

The family first lived in a home built by Grandfather Phillips at 327 Lincoln Street. John attended the Adams Street School, where his mother had taught, then transferred to the Roxbury School when his father built a new red brick house in an orchard near the residence of Grandfather Saylor. The family stayed in this home on Saylor Street until 1921, when John's seven-year-old sister Margaret died of diphtheria. After her death, Minerva insisted upon relocating, so Tillman erected a new yellow brick house on an adjacent property up the road. With a flourishing law practice, Tillman eventually moved the family into a newly constructed fieldstone dream house on the adjoining lot.[6]

John Saylor, then, grew up in upper-middle-class comfort. His father was a successful attorney, owner of three houses, and a member of the Johnstown and Sunnehanna country clubs. A Republican, Tillman eventually entered local politics, serving as city solicitor during the 1930s. Prosperous and prominent, Saylor's parents were loving disciplinarians who set high ethical and moral standards for their children. They insisted upon religious instruction. The Mennonite faith, at least for the Saylors, had long ago given way to the Dutch Reformed Church and then the United Church of Christ. The children were required to attend Sunday school and regular Sunday services. John remained an active member of St. John's United Church of Christ throughout his life, raising his two children in that faith, teaching adult Sunday-school classes, and being elected president of the congregation.[7]

As former teachers, the Saylors also prized education. Their three surviving children, who went to religious-affiliated colleges, all obtained advanced de-

grees. Perhaps John, practical minded, fun loving, and likable, was the least intellectually gifted of the siblings. Although academic courses were a struggle for him, he graduated from Franklin and Marshall College and the Dickinson College School of Law. His younger brother, Tillman, invariably described as "brilliant," graduated from Haverford College and Harvard Law School. Anna Catherine received her undergraduate degree from Hood College in Frederick, Maryland, and her master of arts degree from Columbia University, where she studied with famed historians Allen Nevins and Carleton J. H. Hayes. She planned to go on for her doctorate in political science but abandoned that goal when she married and had a child. After her family had been raised, she became an associate professor of political science at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown.[8]

In the 1910s and 1920s, when John Saylor was a young man, Johnstown offered glorious entertainment choices for the affluent. Luna Park in Roxbury, near the Saylor home, was a summer amusement facility that featured a boardwalk, boating pond, harness racetrack, merry-go-round, and roller coaster. The Majestic and Cambria theaters in downtown Johnstown offered plays, concerts, and vaudeville acts. Silent movies captivated audiences at the Nemo, the State, the Globe, the Grand, and other theaters. The Auditorium lured crowds with dances, roller-skating, boxing matches, and big band music. One could buy peanuts and popcorn from street vendors or purchase sandwiches and ice cream at the Elite Candy Store and Kredel's Drugstore. More substantive meals were available at the Green Kettle Room or at hotels such as the Fort Stanwix. In the summer there was plenty of baseball, employers such as Bethlehem Steel fielding teams in amateur hardball leagues. In the mid-1920s, the city built Point Stadium at the juncture of the Stony Creek and Little Conemaugh rivers, future stars such as Rip Collins and Joe Cronin playing professional minor league baseball for the Johnstown Johnnies in the Middle Atlantic League. And if one wanted a change of pace, only a few miles' travel would provide opportunities to fish, hunt, hike, picnic, and commune with nature.[9]

Indeed, John Saylor's preservationist perspective was shaped during his formative years in Johnstown. He had ample opportunity to experience nature on his uncle Sam and aunt Maggie's farm in Somerset County. Moreover, his mother revered nature, and his father was an avid angler and hunter who instilled a passion for these outdoor activities in his sons. In later years, John would say that his love for nature derived from his "first memory of walking through woods with [his] father." Tillman often went big-game hunting in

Alaska and the American West, and the Saylor homes were adorned with trophy animals. In the 1920s, Tillman Sr. helped establish a sportsmen's association that purchased a hunting and fishing camp near Cook's Run in Potter County, and throughout his life John took periodic refuge at "Lost Cabin." Mr. Saylor also helped nurture his son's love for national parks. John Saylor recalled that his father took him at age twelve to Yellowstone National Park, noting that this experience helped to mold him into a lifelong champion of wilderness and the national park system.[10]

Tillman Sr. also claimed Gifford Pinchot as a friend, thus passing along to his son the conservationist viewpoint that had emerged during the first two decades of the twentieth century, when Progressives, led by President Theodore Roosevelt and Pinchot, his Pennsylvanian chief of forestry, championed the efficient use of natural resources. Their utilitarian viewpoint held that experts in the federal bureaucracy could scientifically manage the public domain to eliminate waste and plunder by special interests. Progressives also gave heed to preservation: scenic lands were to be set aside to serve humankind by providing recreation, refreshing the spirit, eliminating stress, and transforming "sissies" into virile outdoor participants. As a member of Congress, John Saylor especially identified with the preservationist impulse and was consequently labeled a "Teddy Roosevelt Conservationist."[11]

The teachings of John's religious parents also reinforced his preservationist outlook. They emphasized the notion of stewardship more than human dominion over nature: natural scenic treasures were sublime examples of God's handiwork that should not be defiled by humans. This viewpoint was also voiced in the writings of John Muir, who had cofounded the Sierra Club and helped establish Yosemite National Park in the 1890s. While there is no evidence that the Saylors were familiar with Muir's work, their Nature-as-God's-Temple philosophy was similar to his.[12]

Like his hero Theodore Roosevelt, John Saylor was intensely nationalistic. National parks and other areas of scenic beauty glorified the nation, and these patriotic symbols should not be corrupted by commercial enterprises. His children tell the story of the time he took them to see the Petrified Forest. There Saylor spotted a man pilfering a petrified rock as a souvenir and ordered the culprit to put it back because it belonged to the American people. If every visitor took a souvenir, he scolded, the park's beauty would be diminished. He believed that the federal lands belonged to the American people and that it was the duty of Congress to protect the public estate from despoliation. To be sure,

public lands outside national preserves should be open to grazing, mining, lumbering, and dam building, but not to commercial use exclusively. Some of these areas should be set aside as additional parks or wilderness.[13]

John Saylor's urban, industrial environment also may have influenced his outlook. Author Malcolm Cowley, a Pennsylvania native, described Johnstown as "one of the grimiest small cities in the world." Area coal mines and steel mills blighted the landscape, fouled the rivers, and smudged the air, but industrial degradation may have made Saylor more appreciative of primeval lands, sparkling streams, and abundant wildlife. Remarkably, and perhaps not coincidentally, western Pennsylvania produced four nationally renowned environmentalists during the middle decades of the twentieth century. Along with Saylor, the preeminent preservationist in Congress, Howard Zahniser, who grew up along the upper Allegheny River in Tionesta, served as executive secretary of the Wilderness Society and dedicated his life to the enactment of legislation preserving pristine areas. Rachel Carson, who triggered the modern environmental movement by exposing the dangers of pesticides in *Silent Spring,* was born and raised along the lower Allegheny River. And the environmental cult hero Edward Abbey, before moving to Arizona to write literary classics such as *Desert Solitaire* and *Appalachian Wilderness,* grew up as a Saylor constituent in Indiana County.[14]

In spite of his eventual prominence, however, John Saylor's academic record gave few hints of his future success as a legislator and preservationist. At Johnstown High School from 1920 to 1924, he performed well in history classes but struggled with Latin and physics, an overall C student. But he was personable, outgoing, and active in extracurricular affairs. At six feet four inches he towered over his classmates, but he was exceedingly thin and not very athletic, shunning basketball in favor of track and the rifle team. He was a member of the student council and appeared in five plays with the Dramatics Club. The high school yearbook, *The Spectator,* took note of his "gift of gab," listing "red hair" among his likes and his favorite expression as "where's Flo?" "Flo" was Florence McConaughy, an attractive, red-haired classmate and fellow dramatist who drew the attention of several boys, not just Saylor. She listed her likes as "boys," her dislikes as "teachers," and her goal as "to get out of J.H.S." Saylor named "walking" as a dislike, his pastime as "acting," and his goal as "to become a lawyer."[15]

The yearbook also carried one of Saylor's short stories. It tells of a young man left alone at his family's large, three-story home in a desolate area outside

of town. He tries to occupy himself with reading and solitaire but begins to see shadows and hear noises. Frightened, he gets his father's revolver and proceeds to investigate. Nervously he examines the rooms on the first two floors without result, then moves to the third floor and slowly opens a door. Two "eyes" glare at him in the darkness. He cocks the gun and prepares to shoot but first flips on the light. The "eyes" turn out to be bottles of phosphorous on his father's laboratory shelf. Relieved, he descends the stairs, soon learning that the shadows he had seen were his own. One is tempted to read lessons into this story about most fears being unjustified and life's mysteries having logical explanations. But the story probably best serves as an example of Saylor's sense of drama. As a husband, parent, and member of Congress, he enjoyed surprises and histrionics and was always a bit of a ham.[16]

Only sixteen at graduation, Saylor was sent to Mercersburg Academy for additional preparation before college. Those recommending him to the school included the family minister, J. Harvey Mickley, and high school English teacher Kathryn Ulery. Mickley had baptized the candidate and considered him "a young man of good parts and character." He urged the headmaster to provide Saylor with "helpful advice as to what studies he should take and give him sufficient to keep him busy." The minister also let the academy know that the boy's father was a prominent attorney who at that moment was serving as a delegate to the Republican national convention in Cleveland.[17]

Ulery observed that the applicant had a fine mind but that "somewhere in his work he had poor preparation or failed to apply himself." This lack of preparation included the subject of English. But John was "sunny-tempered, honest in his convictions and devoted to friends." He also came from a fine family: "While his parents hold their children responsible for home duties and impose necessary restraints, the family intercourse is that of affectionate comradeship," the teacher noted. She concluded that the academy and Saylor would mutually benefit from their association.[18]

The boyhood home of President James Buchanan, Mercersburg was a tidy town of fifteen hundred people located in south-central Pennsylvania, near the Maryland border. Affiliated with the Reformed Church, Mercersburg Academy was a boarding school for boys. As an educational institution, it traced its roots to 1836, when it was part of Marshall College. It was established as a private boys' preparatory school in 1893 by Dr. William Mann Irvine.[19]

Headmaster Irvine was a strait-laced, quirky man who used new terminology for the equivalent of grades nine through twelve. Freshmen were "jun-

iors," sophomores were "lower middlers," juniors were "upper middlers," and seniors were "seniors." Believing religion to be the "Queen of all Sciences," he made weekend morning chapel mandatory, as well as prayer before each evening meal in the dining hall. The hymn "Onward Christian Soldiers" routinely played at academy functions such as the opening of the fall term. Smoking was prohibited in all college buildings. And Irvine recoiled at the use of the words *bathroom, toilet,* and *lavatory,* so if nature called, one asked to use "the Ten" (for the number painted on the doors of all lavatories). Students had to abide by a code of conduct. Serious violations such as drinking or gambling brought expulsion, and lesser infractions resulted in walking guard—a weekend detention that required the offender to pace around the campus for hours at a time. Breaking the smoking ban, for example, brought ten hours of walking.[20]

Irvine was beginning his thirty-second year when John Saylor enrolled as an upper middler. (One of his schoolmates was future film star Jimmy Stewart, from Indiana, Pennsylvania.) Accepted as an upper middler, Saylor made an arrangement with the registrar whereby he would take senior courses and if successful would graduate with the class of 1925. Tall and stick-thin, Saylor posed in suit and black bow tie with the ninety-nine members of the class of 1925. Except for one young man from the Canal Zone in Panama, all were white. The school's restriction against women, its religious affiliation, and the annual cost of one thousand dollars made the academy a bastion for white male Protestants. Blacks were excluded until 1964 and women until 1969. On occasion, the school admitted Hispanic and Native American students. It imposed a strict quota for Jews.[21]

The school year began in mid-September under a cloud. The previous July, President Calvin Coolidge's son, Calvin Jr., who would have been a member of the class of 1925, had died of blood poisoning. The academy yearbook, *The Karux,* was dedicated to him, a memorial service held in mid-November. Irvine described the president's son as "manly and clean in habit and mind, and in character . . . earnest, direct, true and strong."[22]

In preparing its students for admission into Princeton, Dartmouth, Yale, and other top colleges, the academy required a liberal arts curriculum with courses in math, history, English, science, and language. Saylor's fall courses, under his special arrangement, consisted of Virgil, solid geometry, trigonometry, upper middler French, and senior English. The school also emphasized oratory, with public speaking including debates and formal presentations. Based on experience, effort, and talent, speakers were divided into three cate-

gories: Scrub, Prelim, and Proper. Scrubs were the least able, Propers the most talented. Already stigmatized, Scrubs were also restricted to campus study hall on Saturday evenings. As a Scrub, Saylor took the negative on the topics "Resolved: That the United States Government Should Own and Operate the Railroads" and "Resolved: That the United States Government Should Own and Operate the Coal Mines." Promoted to Prelim, Saylor took the affirmative on the topic "Resolved: That the United States Government Should Grant Statehood to Alaska and Hawaii." Preparing for this debate, he later claimed, made him an advocate of statehood for these territories as a member of Congress. Saylor eventually achieved promotion to Proper in the spring of 1925.[23]

The school tried to keep its young men occupied outside the classroom, offering football, baseball, track, swimming, boxing, and wrestling. Saylor, however, did not participate in sports. Nor did he join the Drama Club or any other organization. Periodically, the academy held formal dances and brought young women to campus from Penn Hall in nearby Chambersburg. Off the dance floor, couples were restricted to a certain plot of ground and were carefully chaperoned. Occasionally, Mercersburg brought special guests to talk to the young men about sex. One speaker advised that they might thwart glandular yearnings by hanging "a portrait of Roosevelt up on the wall, and when temptation comes, look up and inquire, 'How about it, Teddy?' I can't think of Theodore Roosevelt in connection with sex wrongdoing."[24]

On Saturdays, if students were not gazing at images of Teddy Roosevelt, they could walk into the town of Mercersburg to watch a movie at the Star Theater or snack and play pinball at McLaughlin's. The school newspaper also recommended hunting as an autumn diversion. While the school prohibited smoking, drinking, gambling, and on-campus dating, it did permit students to possess shotguns. "A great deal of pleasure can be had by going for a short hunt before morning roll call," the paper advised, adding, "It is surprising the amount of territory one can cover between sunrise and seven o'clock." An all-day Saturday hunt was possible if a student obtained permission to miss chapel and dinner, and one could also hunt all day on Thanksgiving. Bagged game could be given to Steigers, the dining hall director, so that "the fruits of his labors" could "be enjoyed by the sportsman."[25]

Recreational diversions were dependent upon good conduct and passing grades. Those who were not successful academically were said to have "conditions," and their Saturdays were spent getting extra help from teachers. Whether from homesickness, the hospitalization of his mother, or a lack of preparation,

Saylor had conditions every term. At the end of the fall term, he had received insufficient grades in every subject except geometry. He was dropped from the senior class and given less advanced courses in French and Latin, while continuing to take geometry, trigonometry, and senior English. He failed every course in the winter and spring terms. The academy instructed him to remain on campus for additional study, tutoring, and makeup exams from June 4 to June 13, at a cost of three dollars per day. If he refused, he would not be permitted to return in the fall.[26]

These instructions prompted a visit from Tillman Saylor Sr. He learned that his son had been "loafing all year." One teacher told him that John had been "jazzing around campus when he ought to have been studying," and another coldly advised the father "to take him out and put him to work." "Considerably exercised," Tillman Saylor withdrew John on June 6 and "took him home and gave him a job with a pick and shovel."[27]

After receiving a bill for the unpaid balance of the short summer session, John's father sent a stern letter protesting the charge of eighteen dollars and the fact that he had not been kept informed of his son's lack of effort and academic progress. Headmaster Irvine replied that the registrar had informed him that the bill had been a mistake and that the money would be refunded or credited to the account when the student returned in the fall. Irvine was perplexed, however, by the charge that the school had been remiss in keeping the father apprised of his son's academic standing. Ten progress reports, all discouraging, had been mailed to the parents. Additionally, at a spring meeting, the father had been told that the boy "had been poorly prepared and that possibly he was not very brilliant." Given John's level of effort, the registrar informed the father, it would take three years for him to complete his studies at Mercersburg. The issue of his return became moot, however, when he was accepted at Franklin and Marshall College. Saylor seemed to walk away unscarred by his experience at Mercersburg. He always claimed to be a graduate of the academy and, despite his lackluster record, became a member of its board of regents in 1962.[28]

Affiliated with the Reformed Church, Franklin and Marshall College was located in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Franklin College, founded in 1787, had merged with Marshall when that college relocated from Mercersburg to Lancaster in 1853. Like Mercersburg Academy, F&M was mainly a school for white male Protestants. There was no quota for non-Protestants, but in reality few Catholics and Jews attended the college. The first African American graduated in 1950, and women were not enrolled until 1969.[29]

Dr. Henry Harbaugh Apple, the college's popular president, was determined to expand the enrollment and reputation of F&M. He recruited a large freshman class of 256 in 1925, thus bringing the total enrollment to 656, more than doubling the student body of 1920. Over the next four years, he expanded the offerings and facilities in science and business, and the student body climbed to more than 750. In twenty years, from 1909 to 1929, Apple had increased the number of buildings from six to fifteen, enlarged the faculty from thirteen to forty-four, and grown the endowment from two hundred thousand dollars to more than one million. Apple, the student newspaper noted, was proud of the growth and "radiated happiness about the Campus to the extent that, for the period of his administration, their [*sic*] has been a constant wholesome and happy life led by the students."[30]

The students, of course, were not always happy. They cheered the elimination of compulsory Sunday-morning chapel in favor of a voluntary monthly vesper service, but they decried Saturday-morning classes and a mandatory Wednesday-afternoon convocation. The convocation was thought to be gruesome because it forced students to endure announcements and boring speeches for an hour. To fill the time, they also had to sing songs, and there were only so many times they could happily sing "Old Black Joe." The students even threatened to strike when the Christmas break was shortened in 1928. And the ban against Victrolas in dormitory rooms also brought protests: Why could students play musical instruments but not Victrolas? Would it not make more sense, the school paper asked, to establish a curfew against loud noise? Some students, doubtless those who had already met the standard, complained when the Latin requirement for liberal arts majors was reduced from four to two years. John Saylor probably was not one of those protesting the change.[31]

Following his pattern at Mercersburg, Saylor avoided membership in campus clubs. He did join Chi Phi fraternity and as a sophomore played one season of varsity football. A scrawny lineman on a twenty-six-player squad, Saylor suffered through a disastrous season. As a member of the Eastern Collegiate Athletic Association, F&M scheduled games against Ursinus, Muhlenburg, Gettysburg, Dickinson, and Albright, along with games against the likes of Army. Saylor and his mates posted a record of no wins, eight losses, and one scoreless tie. They were shut out in seven of nine contests and outscored 190 to 13. Saylor terminated his football career after that one dreadful season.[32]

Academically, Saylor showed marked improvement over his performance at Mercersburg. Of course, this was not difficult. He was an English major but received his best grades in four history classes. As always, Latin gave him trou-

ble, and he had to repeat a course in Horace and Juvenal. The year he played football, he managed to fail a two-semester physical education class, which he was forced to repeat his senior year. He also struggled with French and chemistry. His scholastic difficulties, as usual, resulted from a lack of effort and too much "jazzing around." The college yearbook noted that "his intimate knowledge of the town is indeed astounding, in contrast to his lack of knowledge in Latin class. His generosity to the girls is well known to all, and he is always present at the bigger and better social functions of the town." Saylor, the yearbook continued, believed that F&M "cramps his style" and planned to seek brighter lights "and to study a little law on the side."[33]

In the fall of 1929, just a month before the stock-market collapse, Saylor enrolled at the University of Michigan Law School, his father's alma mater. This experience proved disappointing, his grades substandard, and he was asked to leave in June. Saylor rarely mentioned this setback, but it may have helped shape his future. The scarcity of jobs in the depressed economy also may have served as a sobering influence. Whether out of economic desperation or intellectual maturation, Saylor eventually committed himself to the serious pursuit of a law degree.[34]

Saylor was one of fifty-eight men and two women who entered the Dickinson School of Law in the fall of 1930. The law school had been established in 1834, but the college was founded in 1783 and was claimed to be the twelfth-oldest in the United States. Dickinson is located in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, a city of about ten thousand people tucked in the Cumberland Valley, about seventeen miles southwest of Harrisburg.[35]

Saylor attended Dickinson from 1930 until 1933, the worst years of the decadelong depression. The budget was so tight at the law school that it did not publish a yearbook in 1933. But for those with the wherewithal, education costs were reasonable. The tuition was $250 yearly, plus another $340 for room and board at a nearby private residence. The three-year course of study consisted of classes in such subjects as contracts, criminal law, torts, property, constitutional law, and moot court. Saylor did not excel academically, but he was one of thirty-five members of his entering class of sixty to graduate. And fortunately, he had a job waiting for him.[36]

Saylor returned to Johnstown to work at his father's law firm, launching his career at a time when Johnstown, like other American cities, was under-

going economic disruption, political turmoil, and labor strife. Johnstown had the additional burden of being devastated by another flood.

Even cities with diverse economies were ravaged by the Great Depression, but Johnstown was generally a one-company town. In its coal mines and steel plants, Bethlehem employed nearly fourteen thousand laborers out of the city's labor force of seventeen thousand, accounting for 72 percent of the town's total wages. Bethlehem was wounded but not incapacitated by the Depression. To survive, it curtailed production, idled some mills, chopped wages, and reduced the full-time workforce, with only 15 percent of the company's workforce laboring full-time by the late 1930s. Part-timers worked one or, if they were lucky, two days per week. Between 1929 and 1932, wages were slashed by 64 percent. Then came another 50 percent reduction in 1932. The average weekly wage had plummeted from $36.07 in 1925 to $12.77 in 1932.[37]

Less income meant that workers and merchants had to struggle to get by economically. To attract customers, some businesses, such as Glosser Brothers Market, extended credit and issued coupons offering a five-cent discount on a single total purchase. To earn extra income, women did sewing and served as laundresses, maids, cooks, and dishwashers outside the home. At nearby farms, men and older children bartered their labor for milk, eggs, potatoes, and other produce. Desperate souls picked through garbage and coal-slag heaps, and some stole redeemable bottles from front porches. Nearly five thousand people left Johnstown during the early years of the Depression, and another six thousand county families had to go on relief to obtain a four-dollar weekly food allowance.[38]

Those people who could not pay their taxes or meet mortgage payments faced the possibility of losing their homes. Bethlehem allowed its mortgagees to restructure their payments, and the state of Pennsylvania gave abatements for penalties and back interest if the delinquent agreed to satisfy unpaid taxes in five annual payments. Still, many lost their homes to the bank and the county. John Saylor's sister recalled that a family she knew lost their home even though they had paid off 80 percent of their mortgage. She complained to her father about the injustice of foreclosure, but he said, "My dear, until the final payment is made, it's just rent."[39]

Without financial records or personal correspondence for the period, it is difficult to generalize with any certainty about John Saylor's standard of living. But even with the sorry state of the economy, his practice seems to have prospered. After all, he worked for a prestigious firm whose clients included

Bethlehem Steel and the Pennsylvania Railroad. Saylor was successful enough to purchase a new home in downtown Johnstown in 1937, becoming a partner in the firm by the end of the decade.[40]

Politics did not initially beckon to Saylor, perhaps because city government seemed so ineffective. Historically, Johnstown had been an obstinately Republican city, but the incumbent mayor, O. Webster Saylor, John's uncle, was under siege. In hard times, desperate citizens looked for answers, and the Republican mayor did not seem to have them. In the mayoral race of 1931, the community turned to Edward "Eddie" McCloskey, an irascible, demagogic newspaper publisher who ran as an independent.[41]

McCloskey was a self-taught former prize-fighter who established the *Derby* in 1927. In his newspaper and later in his mayoral campaign, he attacked "the interests"—mainly Bethlehem Steel. Johnstown, he said, should diversify its economy so that the community would not be so dependent on and beholden to Bethlehem. He charged that its executives were overpaid and its laborers underpaid. Its tax rate was too low and its influence too pervasive. It controlled the city's two major newspapers, the police department, and local politicians. He called the Chamber of Commerce the "Chamber of Comics" and demanded "fewer cops." He also pushed national and local public works projects as a remedy for the Depression.[42]

At first, McCloskey was popular. He made city council meetings open to the public, reduced the size of the police force, rarely used his power as magistrate to administer fines, increased the tax on property, and persuaded the city to go into debt to fund the construction of sewers as a works project.

But McCloskey was not effective. Citizens grew tired of his combative style and his constant battles with the city council. Plus, hard times persisted, and Bethlehem threatened to relocate some of its plants outside the city. In 1935, he did not seek reelection, and Johnstowners turned to Daniel Shields, another independent. Shields promised to bring order, stability, and civility to the city. He got along with the city council and ingratiated himself with Bethlehem and many middle-class city residents by lowering the tax rate. Mayor McCloskey's city solicitor had openly advocated the overthrow of capitalism, but Shields appointed a dignified conservative, Tillman Saylor Sr., to serve as the city attorney. Saylor's job, which his son John would later inherit, consisted of advising the mayor and city council on legal issues, representing the city in court cases, clearing liens for unpaid taxes, and defending the mayor's dispensation of justice on appeal.[43]

The new administration had been in office less than three months when Johnstown was clobbered by another flood. Days of rain had swollen the rivers, and they sloshed over their banks on St. Patrick's Day, covering the city with fourteen feet of water. The flood took twelve lives, knocked out telephone and electrical service, capsized cars, collapsed bridges at Franklin and Poplar streets, and destroyed seventy-seven buildings. In all, damages amounted to a total of forty million dollars.[44]

In addition, New Deal legislation affected labor relations in Johnstown. In 1935, Congress passed the National Labor Relations Act—generally referred to as the Wagner Act—granting workers the right to unionize and barring employers from undermining organizational activities in their plants. The National Labor Relations Board was established to oversee factory elections, recognize duly elected unions, and investigate charges of unfair employer practices such as terminating workers for attempting to organize. In short, it became unlawful for employers to ban the formation of unions.

In 1935, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), headed by John L. Lewis, set out to organize unskilled workers in key industries such as automobiles and steel. Using sit-down strikes, the union was recognized by General Motors and Chrysler in 1937, with Ford holding out until 1941. In 1937, U.S. Steel accepted the union, instituting a wage increase and a forty-hour week. "Little Steel," such as Republic and Bethlehem, went along with the wage hike and the eight-hour day but refused to recognize the union. At Republic in Chicago on Memorial Day 1937, violence broke out between police and picketers, leaving ten people dead and forty wounded. Johnstown also seemed to be on the verge of violence. In mid-June 1937, the CIO attempted to unionize Bethlehem's Johnstown facility, but that strike brought violence and martial law, ultimately failing. Workers did not unionize at Bethlehem and other Little Steel companies until World War II.[45]

It is difficult to gauge how the tumultuous events of the 1930s affected Saylor's political outlook. There is no evidence to indicate that either he or his father joined the efforts to break the strike against Bethlehem Steel. When Saylor became a member of Congress, representing a heavily unionized coal-mining district, he became a champion of organized labor. As a rock-ribbed fiscal conservative, he deplored the growth of federal bureaucracy and massive government spending, but he accepted the major thrust of the New Deal, especially emergency make-work programs. He considered the Civilian Conservation Corps "one of the best things the Government has ever done." As a

national lawmaker, he supported public housing, the food stamp program, the antipoverty campaign, and increased Social Security benefits. He judged people by the quality of their character, not the color of their skin, and endorsed most civil rights legislation.[46]

Despite the St. Patrick's Day flood, Saylor did not become a champion of publicly financed multipurpose dams, in the tradition of the New Deal. Controlling floods was a legitimate concern of the federal government, but he was less enthusiastic about reclamation and power production. Irrigating arid Western lands, though noble in purpose, was extremely costly and added crops to an already glutted domestic agricultural market. And federally financed hydroelectric power competed with privately produced fuels like Pennsylvania coal. Massive hydroelectric dams also clogged free-flowing rivers and sometimes flooded natural panoramic treasures. But these political and environmental issues were in the future; Saylor's main concerns in the mid-1930s were his law practice and his efforts to win the heart of Grace Doerstler, the daughter of a Pennsylvania Railroad brakeman.

While a student at Franklin and Marshall College, John Saylor had met Grace Doerstler of Rohrerstown, Pennsylvania. Of Pennsylvania Dutch ancestry, she attended nearby Millersville State, the same college that John's mother received her degree from in 1895. After graduation, the two dated while John attended law school in Carlisle and she taught school in Columbia, Pennsylvania. The seven-year courtship ended in 1937 when the couple exchanged vows in the chapel of the Union Theological Seminary, across the street from F&M College. They bought a home at 179 Orlando Street in Johnstown, living there until the 1950s.[47]

The year after the wedding, Tillman Saylor Sr. died from a heart attack at the age of fifty, and John succeeded him as city solicitor, a post he held until 1942. With America's entry into World War II after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, John volunteered his services. The decision to enlist was difficult because it meant leaving Grace and his infant son John Phillips Jr., born in 1941. But there was never a doubt about which military branch he would join. Given his surname, he later joked, he felt compelled to join the U.S. Navy.[48]

As a lieutenant (junior grade), Saylor trained at a variety of East Coast facilities before being sent to the San Francisco Naval Base to serve as a communications officer aboard the newly commissioned U.S.S. *Missoula.* Nick-

named "Miserable Mike," the *Missoula* was a troop transport vessel that was destined to participate in major beachhead assaults in the Central Pacific in 1945, including the invasion of Iwo Jima.[49]

On February 19, the morning of the beachhead assault, Captain Alex C. Kopper called Saylor to his quarters and asked him to provide a flag for the Marine assault battalion. As communications officer, Saylor was custodian of the ship's flags, so he and the Marine battalion's communications officer selected a small boat flag that could be carried with the assault troops. After three days of gruesome fighting, a unit from E Company of the Second Battalion, Twenty-eighth Regiment, Fifth Marine division, scrambled to the top of Mount Suribachi and hoisted a U.S. flag on a twenty-foot pipe. Though tiny, that fluttering symbol brought cheers and inspiration to the men ashore and at sea. Shortly thereafter, the small flag was lowered and replaced by a larger one acquired from another landing craft. Associated Press photographer Joe Rosenthal captured a picture of five Marines, one of them Michael Strank from Johnstown, raising the larger replacement flag. That posed picture won the Pulitzer Prize and became the most admired of the war.[50]

Following the fall of Suribachi, the *Missoula* supplied reinforcements for the invasion of Okinawa in early April. After deploying these forces, the ship was ordered to the southern Philippines to pick up a battalion for an invasion of Japan. Near Japan, the crew learned of the surrender on August 14, and the troops were unloaded at Yokohama to serve as occupational forces. The *Missoula* then returned to the Philippines to pick up more troops for the occupation of nuclear-blasted Hiroshima. After being roughed up by a typhoon, "Mike" was given instructions to return home, arriving in San Francisco on Thanksgiving Day 1945. Saylor went on to Philadelphia, where he was separated from the Navy, then proceeded to Johnstown, where he was reunited with Grace and his young son "Phil" in 1946. The following summer, Susan Kathleen was added to the Saylor family.[51]

In Johnstown, Saylor resumed his legal career but never seemed fulfilled by the practice of law. He remained in the Naval Reserve, joined veterans' and fraternal organizations, and became active in local politics. When the district congressional seat became vacant owing to the death of the incumbent representative, Saylor sought the Republican nomination as a candidate in the special election. He was about to embark on a new and exciting career in politics.[52]

two

Political and Environmental Trailhead

Colonel Robert Coffey Jr. was a war hero. Piloting a P-47 Thunderbolt with the Army Air Force during World War II, the Johnstown native completed ninety-seven missions over Europe and destroyed fourteen enemy planes before being shot down over Germany. Avoiding capture, he worked his way into France and fought with the underground. After the war, the three-time recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross resigned from active military service in 1948 to enter politics and was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. Coffey had represented Pennsylvania's Twenty-sixth District for less than four months before dying on a training flight in New Mexico. A special election was scheduled on September 13, 1949, to select a successor. District Democrats nominated Curry Coffey, the mother of the deceased incumbent. The Republicans named John P. Saylor.[1]

Pennsylvania's Twenty-sixth Congressional District included Armstrong, Cambria, and Indiana counties. Armstrong and Indiana were essentially rural and Republican. Cambria, which included Johnstown, was industrial and narrowly Democratic. In 1949, Republicans held a slight 7,000-vote edge in registered voters. In the special election of 1949, however, Mrs. Coffey had the backing of organized labor, and about one-third of the district's 155,000 registered voters belonged to unions.[2]

A native Alabaman with a southern drawl, the fifty-five-year-old Coffey enjoyed public sympathy, but she faced an attractive and formidable opponent

in John Saylor. His once lanky frame had filled out to 225 pounds, and his expansive personality matched his imposing physical presence. A navy veteran with a creditable war record, he was engaging, articulate, and energetic, his gender giving him a further advantage. To be sure, World War II had been a turning point for women in terms of securing employment outside the home, but national political office, like most upper-management business and professional positions, remained a male bastion. Of 535 members of Congress in 1949, only one woman, Margaret Chase Smith of Maine, held a seat in the U.S. Senate, and only nine women served in the House of Representatives.[3]

Once nominated as a congressional candidate, Saylor decided not to assail Coffey directly. Instead, he assailed the Truman administration for high taxes, mounting deficits, and an expansive and intrusive federal bureaucracy. In short, he argued that Truman was a dangerous radical who was trying to impose on Americans "a socialistic welfare state."[4]

Coffey, on the other hand, portrayed herself as a liberal who strongly supported President Harry S. Truman's Fair Deal domestic policies, especially his repeal of the Taft-Hartley Act. Passed in 1947 over Truman's veto, the Taft-Hartley measure reflected growing sentiment against labor unions and liberalism. It had outraged labor by outlawing the closed shop, in which only union members could be employed. It also prohibited union financial contributions to federal political races, obligated union leaders to sign non-Communist pledges, and authorized the president to call an eighty-day cooling-off period in strikes that endangered national security. By supporting repeal of Taft-Hartley, Coffey won the endorsement of the United Mine Workers (UMW), the American Federation of Labor (AFL), and the CIO.[5]

Saylor attempted to steer a middle course on labor issues. He defended labor's right to organize, bargain collectively, and strike; to his mind the Taft-Hartley Act provided an acceptable, if not perfect, set of guidelines. Work stoppages, he believed, should not be allowed to threaten the national economic interest, so he supported the provision granting the president injunctive powers to temporarily halt a strike. But he opposed the prohibition against the closed shop and considered the loyalty pledge meaningless because, he said, Communist union leaders would lie.[6]

Saylor was a tireless campaigner. Going door-to-door, he estimated that he visited with thirty thousand people, about one in five voters in the district. He worked at a frantic pace and often stopped at corner groceries for quick meals of kielbasa and raw hamburger. He loved people and excelled at recall-

ing names and faces, his captivating personality and good humor an advantage. One of his House colleagues later recalled that Saylor possessed "a naturally grand manner that had a way of transforming even a simple greeting into a special occasion." And a Pennsylvania journalist declared that Saylor was "a guy who could charm a vote out of rock."[7]

In spite of a steady drizzle, about 110,000 of 155,000 registered voters, or 71 percent, visited the polls on September 13, helping Saylor defeat Coffey by nearly 8,500 votes, winning by large margins in Armstrong and Indiana counties and narrowly losing in Cambria County. Asked for her reaction to her husband's victory, Grace Saylor said that she was "thrilled to death for John. He worked so hard." The successful candidate seemed humbled by the "tremendous responsibility" that awaited him and pledged to do everything possible "to live up to the trust placed in me by the voters." He admitted to being exhausted and planned to relax with rod and reel before heading to Washington.[8]

With considerable exaggeration, the Saylor-for-Congress Committee called the win "one of the most pointed and significant political developments of the decade," producing a booklet demonstrating how it had been accomplished. Most important, the booklet advised, "the truth was told—and the truth shall keep you free." As the only off-year congressional contest, the election received considerable national attention, especially from Republicans. House minority leader Joseph Martin (R-MA) called Saylor's victory "a conclusive demonstration that the march toward state socialism can be stopped." The *Chicago Daily Tribune* gave a front-page headline to Saylor's win and the next day followed with an editorial about how the victory served as a repudiation of nearly two decades of "thinly veiled socialism." The *New York Herald Tribune, Baltimore Sun,* and other Republican newspapers also played up Saylor's victory.[9]

Although voters in western Pennsylvania had concerns about Taft-Hartley, big government, and the threat of Communism, other factors better explain Saylor's victory. He was an attractive, amiable, hardworking male candidate with a respectable war record, running in a district that was predominantly Republican. He also had the support of most district newspapers. His victory should not have been a surprise. A Johnstown newspaper reporter summed up the results accurately when he wrote a friend that "the national significance of John's victory was greatly over-emphasized. He did not win on national issues—his victory is just a tribute to his own personality, popularity and vigorous campaigning. It has been many years since such an effective campaigner has appeared on the local scene."[10]

Saylor was sworn in on September 28, 1949, only three weeks before the end of the first session of the Eighty-first Congress. The House chamber was under repair, so the ceremony took place in a nearby room with the congressman's wife, children, brother, sister, and friends looking on from a rear corner. The House of Representatives comprised 261 Democrats, 171 Republicans, and 1 American-Laborite (Vito Marcantonio of New York), with two positions vacant. Conservative Texas Democrat Sam Rayburn, whom Saylor would grow to revere for the discipline he imposed upon the proceedings, was the House Speaker. Joseph Martin of Massachusetts was the minority leader. Three of Saylor's colleagues—John F. Kennedy, Richard Nixon, and Gerald Ford—would become presidents. He was proud to be joining such an august political institution whose duty was public service.[11]

At the end of his first day in office, Saylor attended a dinner party given in his honor by Republican House leaders Joseph Martin of Massachusetts and Charles Halleck of Indiana. Guests included state GOP leaders, the Pennsylvania Republican congressional delegation, and other selected members of the House and Senate. Asked to say a few words, Saylor spoke forthrightly, earning himself a reputation for being blunt, prickly, and independent minded. He called party leaders a "bunch of snobs" who too often sought votes in board rooms instead of mines and factories. The party, he said, might take a lesson from his victory—namely, that to be successful GOP candidates needed to be more sensitive to the needs of ordinary workers and seek their votes aggressively. The audience took offense at the upstart's advice and gave him only a smattering of applause, Martin so incensed that he waited three weeks before giving Saylor a committee assignment. Saylor complained to the press that he was being given "the run around," but eventually he was appointed to the Committee on Public Lands.[12]

Normally, Grace Saylor might have been able to rein in her headstrong husband at a dinner party, but she had returned to Johnstown with son Phil, age eight, and daughter Susan, age two. Grace disliked Washington and politics and wanted to raise the children in Johnstown. "I married a lawyer, not a politician," she said. So John spent weekdays in Washington, where he lived in an apartment near the Hill, and drove four and a half hours to Johnstown each Friday, returning to Washington on Sunday. At first he drove himself, but eventually he had one of his assistants, Johnstown native William Lohr, chauffeur him. Back in Johnstown, Saylor often remained an absentee father. On Fridays he usually had a speech to deliver or a political function to attend, and on Sat-

urdays he went to his congressional office at Ebensburg or Johnstown to make himself available to constituents. Sundays he usually spent with his family, at home and at church, returning to Washington in the evening.[13]

Saylor's staff included Ann Dunbar and Harry Fox. A Johnstown native and graduate of the University of Pittsburgh, Dunbar had served as a secretary in Saylor's law office; she remained his chief legislative assistant until her death in 1972. Harry Fox, an Armstrong County native who had served with Saylor on the *Missoula,* also remained with Saylor until the end. When Dunbar became terminally ill in the early 1970s, Richard Gentry would be added to the staff. Although eager to serve, Saylor had little opportunity to contribute initially, with only three weeks left before the recess. But he used his first vote, on the day he was sworn in, to oppose the Mutual Defense Assistance Bill, which sought a one-year appropriation of $1.5 billion in military aid for Europe and Korea.[14]

The second session of the Eighty-first Congress began on January 3, 1950, and continued for twelve months. The year was dominated by U.S. participation in an undeclared but United Nations–sanctioned police action against North Korea. That same summer Senator Joseph McCarthy, Republican of Wisconsin, ranted against Communists who had allegedly infiltrated the U.S. government and virtually every other area of American society.

Saylor too was concerned about the Communist threat abroad and at home. Like most Americans during the early Cold War, he believed that Communism was a Soviet-directed monolith that had bullied its way into Eastern Europe and China. He supported the Truman administration's effort to contain the "Red Menace" in Europe through the $12 billion Marshall Plan and the creation of a defensive military alliance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). But like hardliners from both parties, he bashed the Truman administration for losing China and making South Korea vulnerable to Communist aggression by pulling out U.S. forces in 1949. When war erupted in Korea in June 1950, Saylor blamed Truman for inviting the North Korean attack but supported the U.S. military's commitment to containing the spread of Communism.[15]

Much of Saylor's time was devoted to more domestic committee work. Republican minority leader Martin had assigned him to the Committee on Public Lands, a forerunner of the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs. Besides public lands, the committee dealt with legislation affecting

territories; Native Americans; irrigation and reclamation; national parks and forests; and mines, mining, and natural resources. As a member of this committee, he worked to protect the economic concerns of Pennsylvania so long as they did not conflict with the national interest. In terms of tariff policy, he was a protectionist who opposed low tariffs because they tended to cost American laborers, especially union workers, their jobs. He spoke out against the importation of cheap foreign oil, especially residual fuel oil, because it competed with Pennsylvania-produced bituminous coal and its availability drove miners out of work. By harming the coal industry, Saylor claimed, the Truman administration was endangering national security.[16]

As a committee member, Saylor was known as a friend of the territories. He supported successful legislation that provided a civil government for Guam and another measure authorizing the residents of Puerto Rico to establish a written constitution. He also favored statehood for that Caribbean island if it was the will of the Puerto Rican people. He developed a close friendship with Joseph Farrington, the Hawaiian delegate to Congress, and championed statehood for that Pacific island and for Alaska. The House passed bills granting statehood to both Hawaii and Alaska, but the Senate resisted for nearly a decade. Still, statehood advocates in both territories knew they could always rely on Saylor to support their cause.[17]

Saylor seemed to delight in his job. His independence sometimes exasperated GOP House leaders, but he was popular with colleagues on both sides of the aisle. He proved a good sport by agreeing to become the catcher on the Republican congressional baseball team. When he made the commitment, newspapers quoted his son Phil as saying, "Gee, Dad, they must have been awfully hard up for players." Saylor was also fond of constituent service and mingling with voters. He especially enjoyed making appointments to military-service academies, and when other members of Congress did not use their allotments, he requested them. He took full advantage of the publicity that accompanied human-interest stories in his district, such as the ninety-two-year-old justice of the peace from South Fork who made the *Guinness Book of Records* by getting elected to another six-year term after fifty-three years of service.[18]

On a more serious note, coal miners in the district had gone on strike, and Saylor worked successfully to obtain potatoes, dried milk, and other surplus food for needy families from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This gesture helped Saylor win favor with the UMW and later made him an advocate of the federal food stamp program. By the end of his first year in Congress, a local newspaper noted that he had done an excellent job of looking

after the interests of the people of his district. He won reelection in 1950, defeating Lewis Evans, a former coal miner and labor organizer, by 6,300 votes.[19]

In 1951, as Saylor began his first full term, he had yet to find his way as a legislator or conservationist. He would do so as a member of the Public Lands Committee, renamed the House Interior Committee in February 1951. Saylor eventually became immersed in Western water issues and developed a reputation for being unfriendly toward federal reclamation and publicly financed hydroelectric dams. There were no national parks, national forests, wilderness, or federal lands in Pennsylvania, so Saylor, unlike Westerners on the committee, could resist the demands of grazing, mining, timber, and irrigation interests to vote his conscience on natural resource issues. His antagonistic attitude toward federal dam building initially derived from his fiscal conservatism, fear of big government, and solicitude for the Pennsylvania coal industry. The Rochester & Pittsburgh Coal Company, with its offices and mines in Indiana County, was a major employer in Saylor's district. Its mines, and those of smaller concerns in the district, produced coal for homes, blast furnaces, and electricity-generating stations in the East. Although little Pennsylvania coal went to markets in the West, Saylor, of political necessity, had to guard against public power projects that weakened the coal and utility industries in general. He insisted that federal reclamation projects be financially sound and serve the main purpose of irrigation. If the principle objective of federal dams was the production of public power, he opposed them. His hostility to big dams and public power dovetailed with his belief in the inviolability of the national park system.[20]

At midcentury, Saylor was concerned more with preserving the wonders of capitalism than with preserving the wonders of nature. He was particularly distressed by the Bureau of Reclamation's ravenous appetite for dam building and its expanding role within the Interior Department. During Franklin Roosevelt's presidency, the bureau's scrawny workforce of two thousand had bulked up to nearly twenty thousand. In the first three decades of the century, the bureau had spent about $9 million yearly erecting small dams in the arid West that impounded water mainly for the irrigation of family farms. But under Roosevelt's public works spending program during the Depression years, the bureau's annual expenditures climbed to $52 million, the central purpose of federal dam building shifting from reclamation (making arid lands arable) to the generation of public power. In the 1930s, the bureau constructed Hoover Dam on the Colorado River and secured congressional authorizations to build

Shasta Dam on the Sacramento River in California's Central Valley and Grand Coulee Dam on the Columbia River—all massive multipurpose facilities that could produce hydroelectricity; control floods; and provide water for domestic use, irrigation, and recreation. Moreover, the sale of power made them self-liquidating. The electricity produced on the Columbia River at Grand Coulee Dam and at the downstream Bonneville Dam, erected in 1938 by the Army Corps of Engineers, enabled the Pacific Northwest to become the center of the aircraft industry in World War II.[21]

There was a modest falloff in dam building during World War II, but planners at the Bureau of Reclamation and Army Corps of Engineers were not idle. To prevent Western streams from "wasting to sea," a popular expression in the early postwar years, they would treat river systems as a whole and plan for the comprehensive development and use of water resources. Large hydroelectric facilities, called "cash register dams" or "paying partners," would finance projects throughout an entire river basin: irrigation works no longer would have to pay for themselves. The revenues from hydroelectric dams in a river basin could also be used to help fund numerous watershed projects. The plan was attractive because it virtually compelled the bureau to build hydroelectric dams to fund reclamation works.[22]

Federal engineers devised plans for the maximum economic utilization of major Western river basins. After studying more than one hundred sites on the Colorado River, they determined that the most suitable locations for mighty hydroelectric dams were Bridge Canyon near Grand Canyon National Monument, Glen Canyon on the Utah-Arizona border, Flaming Gorge on the Wyoming-Utah line, and Echo Park on the Utah-Colorado boundary. The bureau and the Army Corps of Engineers also developed ambitious plans for the Columbia, Missouri, and Rio Grande river basins. To Saylor, these schemes were harbingers of socialism, and he became hostile toward the federal agencies that advanced them, particularly the Bureau of Reclamation and its leader, Michael Straus.[23]

A former journalist, Straus was a wealthy, liberal, idealistic, rumpled New Englander. After becoming the first nonengineer commissioner of the bureau in late 1945, he was driven by the goal of implementing the organization's river-basin development plans. During the war years, expenditures on reclamation totaled $330 million. Under Straus, during the height of the Cold War (1947–51), they reached $1.2 billion. But even more lavish projects were in the works. The bureau pushed its plan for the Bridge Canyon Dam on the lower Colorado