

Ovette Myron Chapin, aka Myron Ovette Chapin, was everyone's man; he was normal in every way, not outstanding in any. His most notable achievement in life was putting on a blue uniform and becoming a soldier in Mr. Lincoln's Army. According to his obituary, he was "a consistent Christian, pleasant and genial". He did not possess the luck of the Irish by any means. In fact, you might say if it wasn't for bad luck, he wouldn't have had any at all. For example, in 1882, "...when returning home on the evening of March 1 with his wife, (he) met with an accident. The rising waters from the rainfall had swept off a bridge near his house, and his horse in the darkness, plunged into the chasm, from which he was extricated with some difficulty. The damage to person and property was considerable." <sup>[1]</sup> He was discharged from the service early due to poor health which plagued him for the rest of his life. And, even in death, he could not win. His obituary was a small paragraph in the newspaper whereas his wife's took up the larger portion of an entire column.

O.M. Chapin, as he called himself, was born on April 18, 1836 in New Haven, Vermont. He was the son of Myron Chapin (1805-1880) and Olive Benedict (1811-1895), also of New Haven. <sup>[2]</sup> They had been married in town on November 30, 1830. <sup>[3]</sup> Myron was an active member of the community. He had been chosen Freeman in 1826; elected Hayward twice; Highway Surveyor twice; School Officer for eleven years (1846-1857). He was heavily involved with church affairs as well. He was a paid pew owner and member of the Congregational choir. He was also on the Temperance List of 1842. <sup>[4]</sup> While residents of New Haven, Myron and his family lived in a number of homes along North Street in town until they bought a farm from Ovette, their son, around 1862 on Quarry Road. <sup>[5]</sup> Myron had four sisters and two brothers who were all born in New Haven as well. His two older sisters were Olive Augusta (1832-1844) and Cornelia Antoinette (1834-1920). A third sister followed Ovette's birth in 1842. Her name was Celinda Isabel (1842-1911). The last two siblings were both boys; Albert Henry (1843-1929) and Lorenzo T. (1846-1883) <sup>[6]</sup>

Ovette Myron was fourteen years old in 1850 and lived in New Haven with a house full of siblings. His father, Myron, worked a \$6,000 farm with the help of a twenty-five year

old hired man named John Freeman. All of the children, ranging in age from sixteen to six, attended school. During the ten years of the decade, many changes in the family occurred. Children grew up and became independent, striking out on their own. Although Ovette was not specifically listed as a member of his father's household in 1860, it was highly unlikely that he was too far from New Haven. There were a number of reasons for believing this to be true. One, he was born and raised in New Haven. Two, his siblings all lived in or very near their birthplace too. Three, he had a girl friend living in town in 1860 - the woman he eventually married in the same year. Fourth, his father, Myron, operated a very successful farm valued at around \$9, 000 that he had built up from scratch. Ovette, being the oldest son in the family, would have been expected to help his father run such an active operation. It was true that there were two other sons old enough to be of help with the farm work, but they also attended school and would, therefore, only be available for labor when school was not in session. <sup>[7]</sup> The presence of the girl friend - Lovina Ellen Bingham - was, of course, the overriding factor in the whereabouts of Ovette in 1860. No young man, smitten by a woman, was going to be any further from her side than he had to be for a single moment.

Miss Lovina Ellen Bingham was born in Cornwall, Vermont on July 3, 1839. She was the daughter of Lucius Augustus Bingham (1804-1857) and Lovina Ellen Riford (1801-1874). By the time she was eleven in 1850, her family had relocated to Warren, Vermont where they had a farm. Ten years later, Ellen as she preferred to be called, was living with her sister, Orra Fidelia, and her brother-in-law, Amos M. Roscoe, a merchant in New Haven. She and Ovette were married July 19 (some records said July 9), 1860 in Warren where the bride's parents lived. She was twenty and the groom was twenty-four. Ovette's occupation was given as farmer and his residence as New Haven. <sup>[8]</sup> The newlyweds established their home in Waltham, Vermont, an adjacent town to New Haven west of the village center where Myron Chapin had his large farm on North Street. It wasn't long before Ovette became a father himself. His first child, Lucius Ovette (1861-1954) arrived about a year after the wedding. Cora Bingham was the second child to arrive about 1863 (1863-1943). The third, and final child, would be born four years later. He was Charles Henry (1867-1957). <sup>[9]</sup>

Myron Chapin continued to prosper in New Haven with the help of his sons, Albert and Lorenzo. The farm was generating a very comfortable income of \$330 in 1863 on which Myron had to pay an income tax of \$16.00 to the Federal Government which was his financial contribution to support the war effort that year. <sup>[10]</sup>

Ovette was around after the wedding just long enough to see his first born son arrive. The sounds of drums, the blare of bugles and the shouts "To Arms!!" was more of a temptation than he could resist. The twenty-six year old newly married husband and father hauled his five feet six inch frame before the recruiter in Bristol and signed his name to the enlistment papers. The dark complexioned, brown eyed and brown haired volunteer joined the United States Army on September 1, 1862 for a nine month's term of service. He was assigned to be a member of Company G, Fourteenth Vermont Infantry as a Private. <sup>[11]</sup> Almost two months later, his enlistment became official when he was mustered-in the service with the rest of the Fourteenth at Brattleboro, Vermont on October 21, 1862. <sup>[12]</sup>

The Fourteenth Vermont only existed for a short time (they were "Nine Months" men), but they saw hard service during their term of enlistment. At first, the Regiment was attached to those units making up the defenses around Washington, D.C. After December 11, 1862, the Fourteenth was placed on guard duty in and around Fairfax Court House where it was engaged in the repulse of Jeb Stuart's cavalry raid. From March to June, 1863, the Vermonters were stationed at Wolf Run Shoals along with other Vermont troops to guard the vital river ford on the Occoquan River. On the 25th of June, the Fourteenth was attached to the Third Division of the First Corps and began its march northward towards Gettysburg. It was a grueling march sometimes covering twenty miles a day for consecutive days at a time. Over two hundred of the Regiment were forced to drop out before every reaching Gettysburg because they could not keep up the pace. The Fourteenth arrived at Gettysburg too late to take part in the first day's action. It bivouacked in a wheat field to the left of Cemetery Ridge. Late on the second day, the Regiment was called into action to help the Thirteenth Vermont repel an attack by

General A.P. Hill on the left center of the Union line. After the tremendous opening cannonade of July 3, during which several men of the Fourteenth were killed by an explosion of a battery caisson, the left flank of Pickett's long grey line could be seen advancing towards the concealed Vermonters. At less than one hundred yards distance from the enemy, the men of the Fourteenth rose at command and delivered a devastating volley into the Confederate columns. The Thirteenth and Sixteenth changed fronts and added their fire to that of the Fourteenth. The result was that Pickett's right wing was caught and crushed. After the main charge was halted and Pickett's divisions were streaming back towards Seminary Ridge, four companies of the Fourteenth, A, F, D, and I, captured most of Confederate General Wilcox's Brigade as prisoners. This independent action taken by the Vermont troops, including Chauncey L. Clark, was credited by the Union high command as being crucial to the turning of Pickett's Charge. The Fourteenth was also part of the Union's pursuit of Lee's forces following the three day battle. It was during this pursuit that, on July 18, 1863, the Fourteenth was released and sent home. The Fourteenth was mustered-out on July 30, 1863.<sup>[13]</sup>

Two months after his muster-in, on December 17, 1862, Ovette was "taken to general hospital".<sup>[14]</sup> The General Hospital he was taken to was the Turner's Lane USA General Hospital in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.<sup>[15]</sup> By January/February, 1863, Private Chapin was a patient in Chestnut Hill General Hospital in Philadelphia.<sup>[16]</sup> He was well enough by April, 1863 to be employed as a cook in the hospital, one of the worst jobs they could have given a man who was suffering from consumption.<sup>[17]</sup> It shows that the hospital staff and administration either had no idea what was wrong with Private Chapin or they totally disregarded the fact that he carried a highly contagious disease that could easily be spread to other recovering patients.

A surgeon from the Fourteenth Vermont Regiment, E. Sprague, had written a statement about Private Chapin's health back in December of 1862 in which he stated that Private Chapin suffered from "...Hemorrhage of the lungs. This was brot (sic) about by exposure to cold...not profuse hemorrhage, but small quantities, raised by coughing. This continuing for some time has weakened the patient considerably. Treatment has been by

expectorants chiefly...." <sup>[18]</sup> Eventually, after seven months out of his nine served, with him being "off duty" for five of those seven sick, Private Chapin was given an honorable discharge for "...general debility and dyspepsia (indigestion and heartburn - heart attack symptoms) on April 20, 1863 at the USA General Hospital, Chestnut Hill, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. <sup>[19]</sup> Immediately after his discharge, Ovette returned to his wife and children in Waltham. He had a daughter born June 6, 1863 (Cora). He attempted to build a fine future for himself and his expanding family. Before the calendar year was out, the less than robustly healthy ex-soldier did what he could to work the farm into a promising business. But he struggled to meet the physical demands of the enterprise. On December 9, 1863, Ovette applied for a disability pension from the Government based on his lung diseases. It was granted. <sup>[20]</sup>

When the 1870 Federal Census was completed, it revealed that "Myron O. Chopin" and wife were living on a modest Waltham farm valued at \$3,000. Ovette had three children by then, two sons and a daughter. Between 1870 and 1880, all sorts of interesting things happened to both Ovette and his father, Myron. By 1870, sixty-five year old Myron had built the family farm into a thriving agricultural business and established himself as an influential member of the New Haven community. Besides being civically active, he had been industrious enough to have a farm assessed at \$12,000. His personal property was valued at another \$3, 000. <sup>[21]</sup> And then Myron's life began a downward spiral.

Apparently, his behavior became alarming to his family, or at least some of it. Exactly what he was doing, or not doing, that gave his sons Ovette and Lorenzo cause for concern was not revealed in the Court documents, But he was, in theirs and other's opinions doing things which were highly unreasonable. On March 31, 1875, Ovette and Lorenzo Chapin, Myron's oldest and youngest sons, asked the Probate Court for the District of New Haven which was then located in Vergennes, for an "...inquisition to be made, and a Guardian appointed for the said Myron Chapin...." on their claim that Myron was "...insane and incapable of taking care of himself & his property...." <sup>[22]</sup> Olive, Myron's wife, was still alive at this time, but her name never appeared in any of the Court documents around her husband's so-called insanity hearing. The reason for that was unclear. Serious enough

concerns were, apparently, presented to the Court for it to conduct interviews of neighbors and "friends" of Myron's. After hearing evidence, Judge J.D. Smith issued a subpoena to appear in Court to Myron on the 31st of March, 1875. The date for his final hearing for just cause was set for April 13, 1875 at 10:00 o'clock at William Partch's Hotel in New Haven. <sup>[23]</sup> At the hearing, Myron was not able to convince Judge Smith that he was not insane and incapable of managing his own affairs. The Court on the same day (April 13) appointed Charles Wetherby (Myron's son-in-law) Guardian and Myron's other son, Albert, as "surety". <sup>[24]</sup> There was no record of Myron's reaction, nor of his wife's, to the Court's decision concerning his welfare and mental state. Life went on as usual in the small village of New Haven.

At least Myron was not committed to some asylum. He was, it appeared, allowed to live at home on his farm with his wife, Olive under the supervision of his Court appointed guardian. Myron was allowed to conduct some business while he searched for his lost reason. In the winter of 1877-78, he came to his youngest son, Lorenzo, and asked to borrow \$500 to advance to his daughter, Celinda. Why he went to Lorenzo and not to Wetherby his guardian was never explained either. Nor was it ever clarified as to why Lorenzo at this moment also asked for a \$500 advance. Plus it was revealed in later Probate papers for Lorenzo's estate, that Myron, at this precise moment, was already in debt to his son for \$1,600. It seemed that Lorenzo was being both a borrower and a lender to the same person at the same time which made no sense whatsoever. But, according to the filed Will and Probate Records for both men, that is exactly what happened. So, with the advance to Celinda, the one given Lorenzo and the money Myron already owed Lorenzo, Myron had a note of \$2,600 against his real and personal property payable to Lorenzo at a designated time in the future. And, to add more to this odd situation, Celinda, to whom the original request for an advancement of \$500 was going, was married to Myron's guardian and would, therefore have a financial interest in this entire business transaction.

As if this deal wasn't bizarre enough, Myron had a miraculous recovery from his state of insanity three years after he was declared incompetent to handle his own affairs. On

January 11, 1878, the same judge who found Myron insane found him sane. Myron's guardian, Charles Wetherby, petitioned the Probate Court of Addison County to be released from his Court appointed role on the grounds that "...Your Petitioner now believes that said Myron Chapin has been restored to his right mind and has so far recovered his reason as to render it unnecessary to continue said guardianship...." [26] A neighbor and acquaintance of Myron, Fayette Sprague, stated in writing to the Court on January 19, 1878 that Myron "...is now and has been for several months perfectly rational & capable of taking care of himself & his property...." [27] L.J. Chapin, who had been living on the farm with his father all these years, signed a similar deposition for the Probate Court for the District of New Haven on the same day. Also on January 19, 1878, Judge Smith of the District Probate Court signed a decree declaring that Myron Chapin was again sane and dismissed Wetherby as guardian of same. Myron signed a release stating that all of his property and possessions were returned to him to his satisfaction. O.M. and L.J. certified the same. Wetherby signed a declaration that he had returned all property and effects to Myron that he was in charge of during his guardianship. [28] All parties in this peculiar episode must have just shaken hands and returned to their every day lives as though nothing out of the ordinary had happened.

One of the parties, though, had a transforming experience. He was Myron. Nine months after Judge Smith agreed that he had found his lost sanity, Myron made out his Last Will And Testament. In the future, he wasn't going to allow any one else to control what belonged to him. In his will, he took care to provide for Olive until such time as she passed. Then the remainder of the estate was to be divided among the rest of his heirs and assigns in equal measure. He specified amounts of cash that were to be awarded his children from the assets of his estate, allowing for whatever advances had been made. He even paid back Lorenzo before the remainder of his estate was divided up. [29] It was all quite reasonable and fairly apportioned for a man who, three years before, was declared insane by a Court of law. But Myron didn't have much time to brood on it. He passed away on April 13, 1880 in New Haven, exactly five years after being found incompetent to take care of himself and his property. Olive, apparently, continued to live in New Haven until her death in 1895. [30]

In 1880, Ovet (Orett) was back in New Haven living with his wife, Ellen, and two of their children, Cora and Charles. Betsey Chapin, Ovette's aunt, also resided in the household as a boarder. She was still single at seventy-eight. Ovette was farming. <sup>[31]</sup> It was not clear if his farm was his own in New Haven, or if he had taken over his father's place. Based on court records, it appeared that all 210 acres of the original homestead had been sold off after Myron and Olive's deaths. By 1885, Ovette was suffering badly from the disease of the lungs that had gotten him and early discharge from the army. The Bristol Herald reported on Thursday, June 25, 1885 that "Ovette M. Chapin had a severe hemorrhage last week, and he is still confined to his house." <sup>[32]</sup> Nine months later, the Burlington Free Press announced that "...Mr. Ovette Chapin continues about the same, without much expectation of improvement." <sup>[33]</sup> Ovette's health was really bad by 1888. The Burlington Free Press reported, "...Ovette Chapin has sold his place to Frank Ingham of Waltham. The consideration was \$1,600 and possession will be given December 7. Mr. Chapin and family will reside at the widow Chapin's homestead for the present." <sup>[34]</sup> Around this time, Ovette and Ellen moved from New Haven to Bristol, presumably to be near his brother. On Thursday, July 10, 1890, the Burlington Clipper reported that "...Ovette Chapin was very sick in Bristol and fears are entertained for his recovery..." <sup>[35]</sup>

The Special Veterans Schedules done in 1890 put Ovette and Ellen residing in Bristol, but seriously failing from the disease of his lungs. He had only served in the Army for seven months and twenty-seven days, but that was long enough for him to contract the fatal consumption that slowly robbed him of his life at only fifty-four on September 20, 1890. <sup>[36]</sup> His obituary described him as a "gentleman" respected by all. "...He was quiet of disposition; had a pleasant word for all. He was a "...consistent Christian gentleman who will be sincerely missed..." by a large number of friends and relatives. <sup>[37]</sup> Ellen continued living in Bristol until her death on February 9, 1907. She had been living with her daughter, Cora Small, on North Street in the village of Bristol. She had gone to Colorado Springs in the Fall of 1906 to visit relatives. She contracted a cold while there. She then went to Elreno, Oklahoma to see her son, Charles. There she took ill in

November. Charles accompanied her back home to Vermont to recover from her pneumonia but never did. <sup>[38]</sup> She was interred alongside Ovette in Evergreen Cemetery in New Haven.

## NOTES

1. www.newspapers.com, Addison County Journal, Friday, March 10, 1882, p. 3 for Ovette Chapin.
2. Ancestry.com, OneWorld Tree Results for Myron Ovette Chapin; www.findagrave.com, Memorial #40356922 for Ovette Myron Chapin.
3. Ibid., OneWorld Tree Results for Myron Chapin.
4. A History of New Haven in Vermont, 1761-1983 by Harold Farnsworth and Robert Rogers, Town of New Haven, 1984, p. 287.
5. Ibid., pp. 259, 263, 184, 185, 188.
6. www.findagrave.com, Memorial #40356922.
7. Ancestry.com, 1860 U.S. Federal Census for Myron Chopin.
8. Ibid., 1850 1860 U.S. Federal Census for Ellen Bingham; Ibid., Bingham Family Tree for Lovina Ellen Bingham; www.familysearch.org, Vermont, Vital Records, 1760-1954 for Chapin, Ovette M.
9. Ibid., Stephanie Jorgensen Family Tree for Ovette Myron Chapin; www.familysearch.org, Vermont, Vital Records, 1760-1954 for Lucius O. Chapin and Anna E. Ladd; Ibid., Vermont, Vital Records, 1760-1954 for Cora Chapin Small; Ibid., California Death Index, 1943-1997 for Charles Henry Chapin.
10. Ibid., U.S., IRS Tax Assessment Lists, 1862-1918 for Myron Chapin.
11. www.fold3.com, Compiled Service Records of Union Soldiers Who Served in Organizations from the State of Vermont, p. 2, image 312161820. Hereinafter referred to as Compiled Service Records.
12. Ibid., Compiled Service Records, p. 3, image 312161839.
13. Ancestry.com, U.S., American Civil War Regiments, 1861-1866, 14th Infantry Regiment Vermont.
14. www.fold3.com, Compiled Service Records, p. 5, image 312161878.
15. Ibid., Compiled Service Records, p. 6, image 312161900.
16. Ibid., Compiled Service Records, p. 8, image 312161918.
17. Ibid., Compiled Service Records, p. 10, image 312161978.
18. Ibid., Compiled Service Records, p. 19, image 312162130.
19. Ibid., Compiled Service Records, p. 17, image 312162061.
20. Ibid., Pension Files for Chapin, Ovette M.
21. Ancestry.com, 1870 U.S. Federal Census for Miran Chapin.
22. Ibid., Vermont, Wills And Probate Records, 1749-1999 for Myron Chapin.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com), Memorial #107941236 for Myron Chapin.
31. [Ancestry.com](http://Ancestry.com), 1880 U.S. Federal Census for Orett Chapin.
32. [www.newspapers.com](http://www.newspapers.com), Bristol Herald, Thursday, June 25, 1885.
33. Ibid., Burlington Free Press, Thursday, March 11, 1886.
34. Ibid., Burlington Free Press, Thursday, November 29, 1888.
35. Ibid., Burlington Clipper, Thursday, July 10, 1890.
36. [Ancestry.com](http://Ancestry.com), 1890 Veterans Schedules for Ovette M. Chapin; Ibid., Vermont, Vital Records, 1720-1908 for Ovette Chapin.
37. [www.newspapers.com](http://www.newspapers.com), Bristol Herald, Thursday, September 25, 1890.
38. Ibid., Thursday, February 14, 1907.