

It takes more than a good resume to get a government contract.

Winfield S. Chapman (1850-)

From: "The City of Portland, 1911."ⁱ

Winfield S. Chapman of Portland, is one of the oldest among the native residents here, his birth having occurred in the then village of Portland on the 3d of July, 1850. He is a son of Col. W. W. Chapman, whose biography precedes this. His parents removed to southern Oregon in 1853., but returned to Portland in 1861, so that Winfield S. Chapman largely



Figure 1. Winfield S. Chapman. (From Oregon Native Son, 1899-1900)

acquired his early education in the schools of this city, principally in the old Portland Academy, from which he was graduated in 1868.

Following his graduation, he entered the office of the city surveyor as assistant and a year after attaining his majority became chief of that department, which position he filled for two years, when a change in political administration occurred and a democrat was appointed. Turning his attention to the field of journalism in 1878, he founded the *Daily Bee*, of which he was editor. He made this a popular and successful paper, but in the fall of that year sold out and again became city surveyor, which position he held until 1881. In that year the city council again became democratic, and he once more left the office; but in 1883 was again appointed, so serving until 1884, when he resigned in order to accept

the position of superintendent of streets, which he held until the office became elective in 1891, at which time he refused the nomination. During the '70s he devoted several thousand dollars to assisting his father in the projected railroad from Salt Lake to Portland and surveyed a part of the line at his own expense. During the following decade he was the controlling spirit in the installation and operation of the Jefferson street steam ferry, which after long litigation broke the monopoly that had been controlled by the Stark street ferry for many years. He was also the organizer and the main promoter in the construction of the waterworks on the east side of the river, the first system established there, and obtained a franchise for, located and planned the Madison street bridge, but sold the ferry and franchise before the work on the bridge had progressed far.

The panic of 1893 found Mr. Chapman with real estate on his hands to the extent of two hundred thousand dollars, but the decline in the real estate market was so great and so rapid that his entire wealth was swept away. In 1899 he went to Skagway, Alaska, where he edited the Daily Alaskan until his return to Portland to prepare for departure to Cape Nome, whither he went in the spring of 1900 as part owner of an outfit of machinery for mining gold from the beach sands. This enterprise, however, was not successful. In 1904 he accepted the position of district engineer in the office of the city engineer, and has since acted in that capacity. While he has given assiduous attention to the duties of the office, which have been discharged with the utmost fidelity and ability, he is also interested in various private enterprises which are now proving sources of profitable return. In politics he has likewise been an active republican, staunchly advocating the principles of the party.

One of the strongly marked characteristics of Mr. Chapman has been his filial love and devotion to his parents, to whom he was especially attentive and helpful in their last years promise. On the 21st of December, 1908, he wedded Miss E. E. Crookham of San Francisco, a daughter of Judge J. A. Crookham of Oskaloosa, Iowa. She is a lady of high educational attainments, who was graduated from Mt. Holyoke College, visited England and other countries of Europe a second time in pursuing her studies. For several years she was a successful teacher in the Portland high school, and afterward accepted a position in the city schools of San Francisco, where she lived and experienced the terrors of "the great fire" in that city. While Mr. Chapman has at times met reverses in his business enterprises owing largely to conditions over which he had no control, he has nevertheless done an important part in the upbuilding of the northwest and his service as a public official has been marked by a fidelity that none have questioned."

From: "The Oregon Native Son, 1899-1901."

Among the first to be born in Portland, Oregon, was the gentleman whose name heads this article, the date of his birth being July 3, 1850. His parents were Col. W. W. and Margaret Fee (Ingraham), Chapman, who came across the plains in 1847, and to Portland in 1849. From 1853 to 1861 he was a resident of Southern Oregon, living there with his parents. In the latter year the paternal roof was again established in Portland, and Mr. Chapman has continued to reside there ever since with the exception of about two years spent in Alaska. He remembers the raising of the first tall flag staff erected on one of the plaza blocks in 1853, and says that some of the limbs of the fir trees standing near had to be cut away so as to facilitate the raising.

The greater portion of his education was secured while attending the old Portland Academy, from which he graduated in the class of 1868. His inclinations led him to engineering for an occupation, an avocation which he has generally followed, still he has devoted

considerable time to editorial work on newspapers. The day after his graduation he entered the office of the city surveyor of Portland as assistant, and a year subsequent to attaining his majority became the chief of that department, remaining in the position two years when he was relieved from duty by the appointment of a democrat, that party having secured control of the council.

In 1878 he established the Daily Bee, of which he was editor. Under his guidance it was popular and successful, but after selling, it met with disaster and suspended. In the fall of 1878 he again entered the employ of the city as surveyor, retaining the position until 1881. In this year the democracy came into power in the council and he was again relieved. In 1883 the republicans held the majority, and he was placed in charge as before. It is quite a coincidence that the gentleman succeeding him on both the occasions when adverse politics removed him, that his successor was one of his Academy graduating classmates—Douglas W. Taylor. The circumstances did not, however, alter their life-long friendship for each other, both treating the matter as it was politics.

In 1884 he resigned the office of surveyor to accept that of superintendent of streets, holding the latter until 1891 when the office became elective. He was tendered the nomination but declined, as his private business claimed his attention to such an extent that he must give up one or the other.

During the "seventies" he devoted several thousand dollars to assist his father in the projected railroad from Salt Lake to Portland, and surveyed a portion of the line at his own expense. In the "eighties" he was the controlling spirit in the operation of the Jefferson street steam ferry, which, after determined litigation, broke the hold the Stark street ferry monopoly had maintained for so many years previously. He was also interested in the construction of the waterworks on the east side of the river, and obtained the franchise for and located and planned the Madison street bridge, but sold the ferry and franchise before work had progressed far on the building of the bridge.

The panic of 1893 found him loaded up with about \$200,000 worth of real estate, the decline in which was so great that his entire wealth was swept away, and he was obliged to begin again on the road to fortune. In 1900 he went to Skagway, Alaska, and while there edited the Daily Alaskan, but gave up the position to return to Portland to prepare for departure to Cape Nome, where he went in the spring of 1900, taking along, as part owner, an outfit of machinery for the purpose of extracting gold from the reputed valuable beach sands. In the venture he fared like others going for the same purpose. There was not yellow metal enough in the sand to pay for working it, and in consequence the endeavor met with failure. Mr. Chapman is of that class which does not stop at defeat, but when it comes begins over again and strives to win. He will yet know success, for brainy men always take the lead and are the managers of this world's affairs.

Mr. Chapman is unmarried, and this may be due to the fact that he promised his mother that he would remain single while she lived. He was noted for his devotion to his parents, and no son could have done more for the authors of his birth at all times and especially during the winter of their years, than he did.



ⁱ Gaston, Joseph, **“Portland, Oregon, Its History and Builders”**, In Connection with the Antecedent Explorations, Discoveries, and Movements of the Pioneers that Selected the Site for the Great City of the Pacific. Illustrated: Chicago – Portland, S; J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1911