

Byron Woodhull

Born 31 December 1854, Chicago, Cook County, Illinois.¹

Died 17 January 1932, Hove Brighton, East Sussex, England.²



Victoria Woodhull's eldest child and her only son, Byron, was a constant reminder of the travails of her first marriage and indirectly formed many of her philosophies and platforms on marriage and what is today referred to as "feminist eugenics." She firmly blamed Byron's disability on the dissipations of her husband and their unfortunate marriage.

Named for his paternal grandfather and severely disabled his entire life, the cause of Byron's disability, whether he was born with it or was injured as a child, is almost irrelevant.³ He required constant adult supervision for his entire life of 77 years.

In his youth, after he and his parents returned from San Francisco about 1859, Byron was left in the care of Woodhull's parents and a cousin, Thankful Claflin. Thankful stayed with the family until they moved to New York in 1868,⁴ at which time Byron's care was divided between the extended family and his father, Canning.

When Victoria and Tennessee left for England in 1877, Byron remained with his grandfather Buck and aunt Margaret Miles until they, too, went to England a year later. In England, for the rest of his mother's life, he lived with his sister and mother.

He was always described as gentle and loving, but unable to speak coherently.⁵ He did, however, apparently learn to write his name as was shown on the identity papers he was required to have filed during World War I.

¹ Victoria C. Woodhull Martin Papers, Southern Illinois University (hereafter SIU)..

² General Register Office, Steyning, Sussex, book 2b page 485.

³ Both causes are given in the primary sources.

⁴ Emanie (Nahm) Sachs Phillips Archive, Western Kentucky University, MSS 317, Box 5, Folder 3.

⁵ His vocalizations were described as 'sepulchral howls.'

11. PERSONAL DESCRIPTION. (To be filled in by Police, not by applicant.)

Height 5 feet 6 inches.

Build Slight

Hair, Beard, etc. Slight brown mustache

Distinctive Marks _____

Signature of applicant Byron Woodhull

Left Thumb Print (if unable to sign name in English Characters)

WORCESTER COUNTY CONSTABULARY
SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE
EYESHAM
JUNE 8 1918

12. Nationality at birth American
If present nationality not acquired at birth state how acquired
By* _____ on _____ (date)
at _____ (place)

13. (a) Name of father Carrington Woodhull
(b) Father's nationality at birth American
If he acquired another nationality give particulars, viz: _____
Nationality _____
Acquired by* _____ on _____ (date)
at _____ (place)

14. (a) Maiden name of mother Victoria Clapham
(b) Mother's nationality at birth American
If she acquired another nationality, give particulars, viz: _____
Nationality English
Acquired by* marriage on _____ (date)
at _____ (place)

* e.g. by naturalization or, in the case of a woman, marriage.

Byron Woodhull World War I Identity papers, Victoria Woodhull Martin Papers, Southern Illinois University.

Byron was not institutionalized until after his mother's death in 1927. In an age when the mentally disabled were commonly removed from any chance of the public interaction, it is to Victoria's credit that she cared for him at home for her entire life.

Byron Woodhull died in a care facility at Hove Brighton in Sussex 17 January 1932.