

The Hiram Johnson Story - Fact or Fiction?

Part of the Anawalt mythology is that HFA was in business with a future governor of California. I am afraid it is not so.

According to the Wakefield genealogy of 1936, Harmon Fred Anawalt was born in 1868 in Rock Island, Illinois. He married Ursula Popkiss in 1890 in Fort Scott, Kansas. They moved to Russellville, Arkansas where Harmon Fred, Jr. (1891), Alfred (1892), Laura (1894), and Bruce (1895) were born. (Alfred and Laura did not survive infancy.)

They moved in 1899 to Lyons, Kansas where HFA was in the retail lumber business “until 1913, when he moved to Kansas City, Missouri where he was with the American Salt and Coal, Co.” They moved to Southern California for Ursula’s health “in 1920, where he established lumber yards at Montrose and Tujunga.”

Initially, the Southern California yards were called “Johnson and Anawalt Lumber.” At some point Mr. Johnson left the business and the story is that he went into politics and became governor of California.

According to Wikipedia, (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hiram_Johnson) Hiram Johnson was born in Sacramento, California in 1866. He attended UC Berkeley, was admitted to the bar in 1888 and practiced law in Sacramento until 1902 when he moved to San Francisco and became an assistant district attorney. He won the gubernatorial election in 1910 and was reelected in 1914. In 1916 he won a seat in the United States Senate and served as Senator from 1917 until his death in 1945.

I don’t know if the lumberman Johnson’s name was Hiram, but even if it was, I am afraid it is not the same Johnson.

(An interesting side note: Bruce’s daughter Virginia lived in the Hiram Johnson house on Green Street in San Francisco in 1953. The large shingle home had been converted into apartments. It is now the site of “Royal Towers,” a large, luxury condominium that was built in the 1960s.)

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