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**NAME** Johnson, Orson Thomas (deceased June 10, 1916)

**PUBLIC OFFICES HELD**

**(DATE)**

**CITY:**

Police Commission January 3, 1905 - May 29, 1906

**COUNTY:**

**STATE**

**FEDERAL:**

**CIVIC ACTIVITIES:**

Charitable, welfare, and philanthropic activities

**BUSINESS OR PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:**

Clerk  
Merchant  
Realtor  
Capitalist  
Philanthropist  
City official

**PORTRAIT:**

**ATTACHED OR ENCLOSED IN ENVELOPE:** none

**PORTRAITS APPEARING ELSEWHERE (DATES)**

Portrait Index  
June 11, 1916

## **ANECDOTES AND PERSONAL IMPRESSIONS:**

**SOURCES OF INFORMATION:**

**BOOKS:**

**NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS:**

Los Angeles Times

**PERSONAL INTERVIEW:** none: filled in biography  
form, 1910

**INTERVIEWED BY:**

**DATE OF INTERVIEW**

Written by: Clare Wallace

February 22, 1938

The Los Angeles Public Library  
Local History Collection  
Biography

R 92  
J 68  
V F

NAME Johnson, Orson Thomas (deceased June 10,  
1916)

Occupation Merchant and Capitalist

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Birth (Date and Place) February 5, 1839, Farmington,  
Illinois

FATHER Orson Johnson

Birth (Date and Place) June 15, 1803

If Deceased, When March 1883

MOTHER Nancy Mason

Birth (Date and Place) April 30, 1809

If Deceased, When February 23, 1852

IF MARRIED, TO WHOM Sarah Anna Craven

Birth of Same (Date and Place) \_\_\_\_\_

If Deceased, When \_\_\_\_\_

When Married September 15, 1863, Galesburg,  
Illinois

CHILDREN (Married Names of Daughters)

Frederick O.

Katharine N. Mrs. F. W. Flint



# ANCESTORS OF DISTINCTION OR LOCAL INTEREST

(Please include names of local interest as "forty-niners," or any one connected with the affairs or development of the state or city, as officials, professional men, merchants, etc.)

Brother and business associate, A. P. Johnson, was a pioneer business man and civic leader, and served Riverside and San Diego counties as state senator.

## EDUCATION (Schools, Colleges, Degrees, Etc.)

Public schools

## CLUBS, LEARNED SOCIETIES, ETC.

RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION Presbyterian

POLITICAL AFFILIATIONS Republican

RESIDENCE IN CALIFORNIA SINCE 1880

# SKETCH

(Please make this as full as possible, giving business affiliations, positions of honor or trust with dates if possible.)

Orson T. Johnson was born February 5, 1839, on a farm near Farmington, Illinois, where he spent his youth. During this time he attended public schools.

While still in his teens he was a clerk in a general store in Galesburg, Illinois. In 1860, at twenty-one years of age, he commenced merchandising on his own responsibility in Altona, Illinois. Five years later he returned to Galesburg, bought out his former employer, Sylvester Reed, and under the firm name of O. T. Johnson Dry Goods Company, conducted the business for fifteen years.

He entered public and political life in Galesburg and was twice elected mayor of that city. Continued ill health brought Mr. Johnson to California in 1880. He established his residence in Riverside where he purchased a large orange grove on Magnolia Avenue and built his home.

In the ten years that he resided in that community he was a prominent figure in business and civic life of Riverside and San Diego counties. His real estate investments were conducted in widely scattered areas of Southern California. The Westminster Hotel, which is still standing on Main Street (Los Angeles), was built by him in 1887.

In 1890 Mr. Johnson removed with his family to Los Angeles to reside permanently. He became one of the largest individual property owners and investors of real estate known at that time in California. He was an accredited millionaire, and in the last years of his life widely known as a capitalist and philanthropist.

Large endowments to the Florence Crittenton Home, to Rest Haven, and to a home for working mothers, are among some of his better known philanthropies. In addition he contributed large

continued



sums toward financing buildings for the YMCA and Parent-Teacher associations, Occidental College, and others.

Mayor Owen McAleer appointed Mr. Johnson to the Police Commission January 3, 1905. He served on the board a little over a year and resigned May 29, 1906.

Mr. Johnson died June 10, 1916, at his home in Los Angeles.

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Please fill this blank with data for an outline of your biography, and return by mail at your early convenience to Chas. F. Lummis, Librarian, Public Library, Los Angeles, California.

For the LOS ANGELES PUBLIC LIBRARY'S DEPARTMENT OF  
"Western History-Material."

This data is not for a book, but to file for reference as part of local history. These archives are to include biographies and portraits of all prominent citizens, living and dead.

Your photograph should be filed also.

The Palace Studio, 351 So. Broadway, will make a portrait of you for these files, free of charge.

Name in full Orson Thomas Johnson  
Chief Occupation Dry Goods Merchant  
Date of beginning it 1854  
Address Galesburg Illinois  
Place of Birth Farmington Illinois  
Date of Birth February 5<sup>th</sup> 1839  
Parents { Father Orson Johnson  
Mother (maiden name in full) Nancy Mason  
Dates of your Father's Birth (and death) Born June 15 1803  
Died March 1883  
Dates of your Mother's Birth (and death) April 30 1809  
Died Feb 23 1852  
Names of her Parents \_\_\_\_\_  
Important Ancestors, Paternal or Maternal \_\_\_\_\_  
Married or unmarried Married  
If Married, to whom (full name) S. Anna Craven  
Date of Marriage Sept 10<sup>th</sup> 1863 Place \_\_\_\_\_  
Education (when and where) in detail. Give name, place and dates of public and private schools, academies, colleges, business and technical schools attended, with degrees conferred (if any), and dates of graduations (if a graduate).  
Common School  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Military, Political and Civic Record**

**When did you come to California or the Southwest—From where?**

*November first 1880 From  
Galesburg Illinois*

**Learned and Technical Societies, Titles, Decorations, Etc.**

**Social, Political, and other important Clubs and Associations (member of)**

*Mayor of Galesburg two terms*

**Religious Denomination**

*Presbyterian*

**Politics**

*Republican*

**School of Practice (if a physician)**

**OFFICER OR DIRECTOR OF THE FOLLOWING CORPORATIONS, OR  
MEMBER OF FOLLOWING FIRMS:**

Name of Corporations or Firms	Office or Position Occupied by You
<p>President and founder of The O. T. Johnson Dry Goods Co - Galesburg - Illinois</p>	

**BUSINESS OR PROFESSIONAL RECORD**

Please furnish here sufficient data to enable the editor to do complete justice to your business or professional record. The facts should be put down in chronological order, beginning with your first occupation. All important business changes and removals, and all firms, business associations and enterprises with which you have been connected should be noted, giving exact dates whenever possible.

*Was* Four years in the capacity of a clerk in Galesburg Ill. Commenced merchandising on my own responsibility in Altona Ill's in 1860. Continuing the business here in 1865 I removed to Galesburg and brought out my former employer, Syl. West. Re-estd. Continued ill health necessitated my coming to California in 1880, for a milder climate and out of door life. Bought an orange grove in Magnolia Ave. near Riverside where we resided the greater portion of the time. In 1887 built the Westminster Hotel in Los Angeles. In 1890 myself with family came to <sup>(OVER)</sup> this city to reside permanently.

## BOOKS

Author of the following Published Books, and name and address of present publishers. Please give complete list of titles, arranged in order of date of publication. If any book is out of print, or privately published, please so state. A printed list of books would assist the editor in securing accuracy. Enter books only here.

### LIST OF BOOKS:

Full Title of Books	Year First Published	Name and Address of Present Publisher

### MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

Has Your Biography been published? *No*

Where and when? \_\_\_\_\_

Any inventions? \_\_\_\_\_

Important works in music or art? \_\_\_\_\_

Names of Children and Dates of Birth *Died June 1890*

*Charles A. Johnson Born Aug. 24" 1864*  
*Frederick O. Johnson Dec. 9" 1869*  
*Katharine N. Johnson Nov. 11" 1873*

*of Announcements*  
Nov. 16/1937

# A. P. JOHNSON, OIL COMPANY DIRECTOR, DIES

Funeral of Pioneer Business  
and Civic Leader of L. A.  
Will Be Held Tomorrow

Friends were shocked yesterday to learn of the death Sunday of A. P. Johnson, prominent oil company director and real estate broker.

Mr. Johnson was a pioneer and a brother of the late O. T. Johnson, prominent in business and



A. P. JOHNSON  
Succumbs at 94

civic affairs in Southern California.

The funeral will be at 1:30 p. m. tomorrow, in Chichester Chapel, at the Immanuel Presbyterian Church, with the Rev. Herbert Booth Smith officiating.

Arrangements for the funeral are in charge of Bresee Brothers and Gillette mortuary.

In the passing of Mr. Johnson, Los Angeles lost one of its leading pioneers and a man who remained active in business at the age of 94. Until a few months ago, he actively directed the affairs of several corporations, including the A. P. Johnson Company. His death was attributed to his advanced age. He had been in business 78 years.

### BORN IN ILLINOIS

Mr. Johnson was born in 1843 on a farm in Peoria County, Ill. He started in business with his brother, O. T. Johnson, in a little store in Altona, Ill. It was the brother who induced him to come to California in 1880, when he bought a 40-acre fruit farm near Riverside.

For 26 years Mr. Johnson made his home in Riverside and played a prominent part in the business and civic affairs of Riverside and San Diego Counties.

On June 24, 1875, Mr. Johnson married Nancy J. Cairns in Altona. She and five children survive him. The sons are Orson T. Johnson and A. P. Johnson Jr. The daughters are Mrs. Candace E. Booth, Mrs. Eva K. Fudger and Mrs. Mary M. Dickie.

For a time, starting in 1884, Mr. Johnson entered politics and served Riverside and San Diego counties as a State Senator.