



ARTHUR OHNIMUS: *The Longest Serving Chief Clerk and First Full-Time Assembly Employee*



1890

1900

1910

1920

1930

1940

1950

1960

1970

1980

June 3, 1893
OHNIMUS BORN
 Arthur Allen Ohnimus was born in San Francisco's South of Market neighborhood and raised in the Western Addition. His father, Louis Juan Ohnimus, is a San Francisco city official and his mother, Grace Pierce, is a famous San Francisco actress.

1910s-20s
NEWSPAPER REPORTER
 Works as reporter for several San Francisco newspapers.

1911-1915
ATTENDS COLLEGE
 Attends Sacred Heart College in San Francisco. After graduating from Sacred Heart, he attends St. Ignatius Law School.

February 26, 1913
BERNICE WEMPLE BORN
 Ohnimus' future wife, Bernice, born in Milford. Daughter of Lassen County Assembly Member N.V. Wemple.

1915 or 1917
CAMPAIGNS FOR PROGRESSIVE ASSEMBLYMAN
 Campaigns for Progressive Sunset District Assembly Member N.J. Prendergast.

January 1915
APPOINTED ASSEMBLY INSURANCE COMMITTEE CLERK
 Works for \$4 per day.

January 11, 1917
APPOINTED STENOGRAPHER
 Works as an Assembly stenographer.

January 15, 1917
APPOINTED BOOKKEEPER
 Works as Bookkeeper to Assembly Sgt-at-Arms for \$5 per day.

January 9, 1919
APPOINTED ASSISTANT MINUTE CLERK

1920s
CAMPAIGNS FOR PROGRESSIVES
 Serves on Executive Committee for Wilson-Marshall Progressive Democratic League of San Francisco.

1921
PRESIDENT OF NATIVE SONS OF GOLDEN WEST IN S.F.
 President of Parlor #52, Mason St., S.F.

January 5, 1921
RE-APPOINTED ASST. MINUTE CLERK
 Salary is \$7 per day.

February 24, 1921
ELECTED MINUTE CLERK

June 10, 1921
GRADUATES FROM ST. IGNATIUS LAW SCHOOL
 School was later renamed University of San Francisco.

December 1, 1922
OPENS LAW OFFICE
 Ohnimus opens law practice at 530 Mills Bldg.; Bush & Montgomery St., S.F.

January 8, 1923
ELECTED ASSEMBLY CHIEF CLERK

1935
VOTING SYSTEM
 Oversees installation of Assembly's first electric voting system.

January to May 1933
BERNICE WEMPLE WORKS FOR SENATE
 Bernice works for Senators John Moran and Dan E. Williams.

January 1937 to January 1941
HIATUS FROM STATE CAPITOL
 Protesting a politicization plan for the clerk's staff, Ohnimus withdraws from the clerk position from 1937 through 1940.

April 1924 to December 1943
ASST. DISTRICT ATTORNEY IN SAN FRANCISCO
 Ohnimus serves under D.A. Matthew Brady. *Warrant and Bond Clerk* (April 1, 1924 to June 30, 1936) *Criminal Attorney* (July 1, 1936 to January 8, 1944)

January 1941
OHNIMUS RETURNS AS CHIEF CLERK
 Speaker Gordon Garland, a Democrat, brings Ohnimus back as Chief Clerk.

December 27, 1943
OHNIMUS MARRIES BERNICE WEMPLE
 Ohnimus marries Bernice Wemple in Santa Monica and one week later accepts Deputy AG job in Sacramento. Bernice's nickname was "Cookie."

January 8, 1944
APPOINTED DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL
 On January 7, 1944, Ohnimus resigns as S.F. Deputy D.A. to accept position as CA Deputy Attorney General under A.G. Richard W. Kenny.

1949
SAMISH ARTICLE
The Secret Boss of California is published by Colliers Magazine. In response, the Legislature passes a law mandating the Chief Clerk to register lobbyists. Ohnimus threatens to resign, so the registration duties are assigned to the Legislative Auditor.

1956
PROP. 14 PASSES
 The Legislature is authorized to hire full-time staff. Assembly staff receive sick leave and vacation for the first time in 1958.

1957
APPOINTED CAO OF RULES COMMITTEE
 Responding to the Kroeger Report and Prop. 14, the Rules Committee appoints Ohnimus to the newly created "Chief Administrator" position at \$1,200 per month.

November 12, 1958
ARGUES FOR FULL-TIME LEGISLATIVE STAFF
 Ohnimus writes a letter to the Rules Committee arguing for full-time Assembly personnel and organization.

1957-1958
MODERNIZES PERSONNEL STRUCTURE
 As CAO, Ohnimus creates the first job and salary classifications & employee manual.

October 4, 1963
RETIRES AFTER 45 YEARS OF SERVICE— 37 YEARS AS CHIEF CLERK
 In news articles, he laments on his long career and the importance of the crossfiling system in reducing partisanship in the legislature (the system had been recently abandoned). James Driscoll appointed as Chief Clerk.

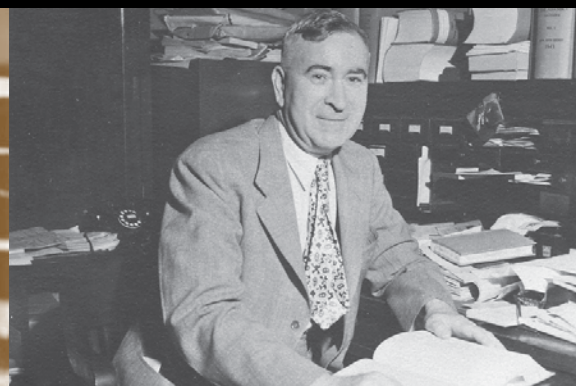
February 5, 1964
RULES CMTE. HIRES OHNIMUS TO RE-WRITE THE HOUSE RULES
 Rules Committee hires Ohnimus for \$1,500 as a contract employee/consultant.

March 13, 1965
OHNIMUS DIES AT HOME (Lewis Apts. in Sacramento)
 Scores of legislators attend his funeral on March 17, 1965.

November 1966
FULL-TIME LEGISLATURE
 Voters adopt Prop. 1a, making California the nation's first full-time legislature.

1973
MEMORIAL TREE PLANTED IN CAPITOL PARK
 Resolution instructs DGS to plant memorial redwood in Capitol Park in honor of Arthur Ohnimus. The tree is located next to the North Annex driveway.

Arthur Ohnimus served as an Assembly employee for 45 years, 37 years as Chief Clerk.



OHNIMUS FAMILY: PROMINENT SAN FRANCISCANS



Speaker Ralph Brown and Speaker pro Tempore Carlos Bee at dais, circa 1959. Ohnimus and staff at Desk. (Sacramento Archives & Museum Collection Center)

Mother: Grace D. (Pierce) Ohnimus, was an actress from S.F. at the turn of the century. She later served as the Manager of Golden Gate Park's Stowe Lake Boat House for 30 years.

Father: Louis Juan Ohnimus, was Superintendent of S.F.'s Woodward Gardens, where he oversaw the Monarch Grizzly Bear Exhibit. He built and managed S.F.'s Stowe Lake Boat House in 1894. He also served as President of the S.F. Civil Service Commission.

Uncle: John Ohnimus, was a famous bohemian artist, muralist, sign painter, and author of the early 20th century.

INTERESTING FACTS

Ohnimus worked alongside fellow clerks Arthur Samish (en-grossing clerk) and Earl Warren (committee clerk) in the post World War I era.

Ohnimus served under 4 Democratic and 8 Republican Speakers.

Until 1957, the Chief Clerk position was part-time, so Ohnimus maintained outside employment as S.F.'s Assistant District Attorney and later as CA Deputy Attorney General.

92 legislators petitioned Governor Earl Warren to appoint Ohnimus as a judge in 1943.

Ohnimus was a supporter of animal welfare legislation in 1917 (AB 798 Prendergast).

Bernice Ohnimus' father, N.V. Wemple, served as a Lassen County Assemblyman from 1925 to 1929.

Ohnimus served as Deputy to Attorney General Robert Kenny, who is credited with the eradication of the Ku Klux Klan in CA. Ohnimus also investigated "fixed" boxing matches in 1944.

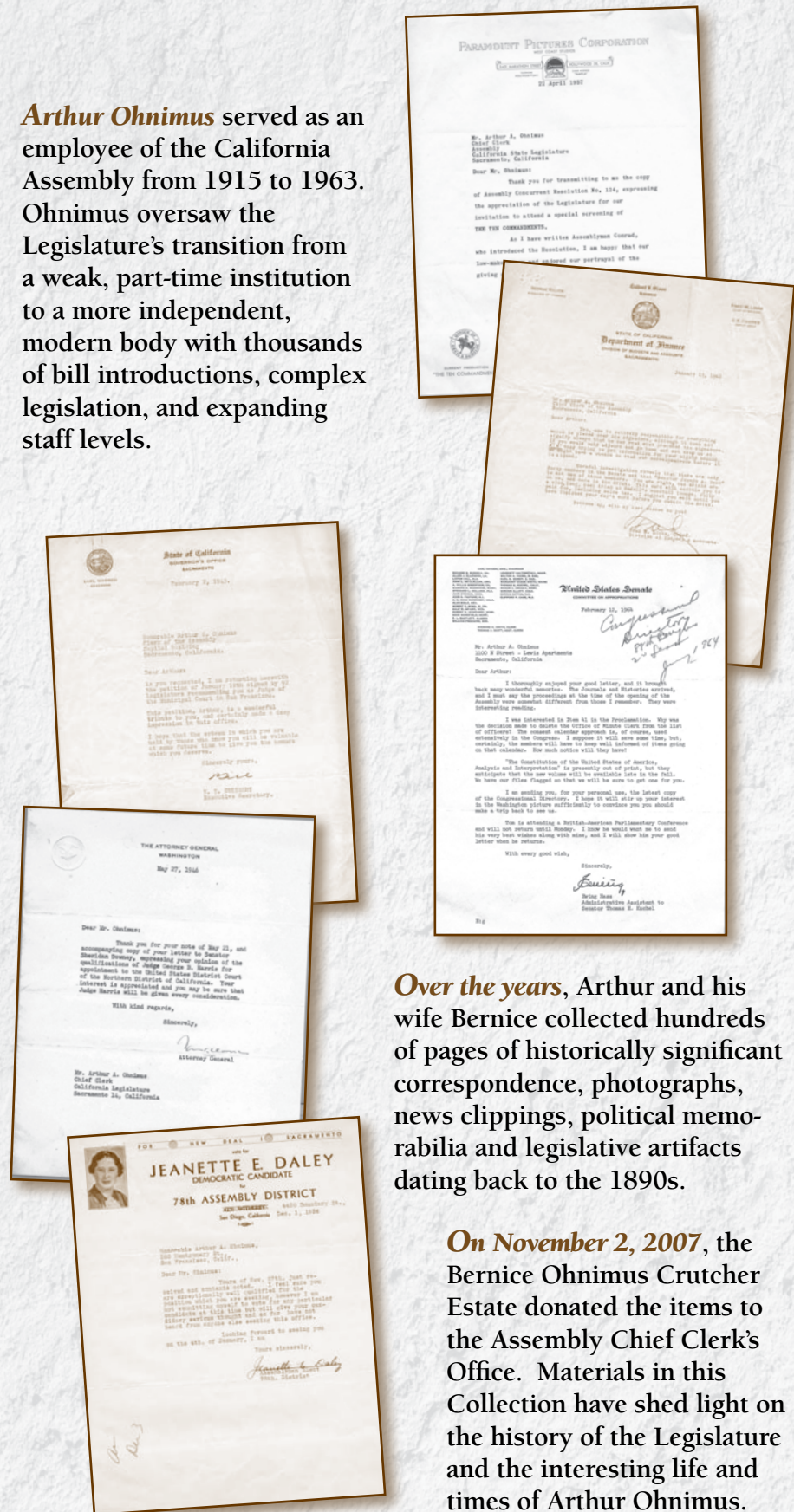
Ohnimus was censured and later cleared in 1925, for his role in a Capitol bribery scandal involving Chinese herbalist legislation.



Ohnimus in front of vote tally board, circa 1958.

ARTHUR OHNIMUS COLLECTION

Arthur Ohnimus served as an employee of the California Assembly from 1915 to 1963. Ohnimus oversaw the Legislature's transition from a weak, part-time institution to a more independent, modern body with thousands of bill introductions, complex legislation, and expanding staff levels.



Over the years, Arthur and his wife Bernice collected hundreds of pages of historically significant correspondence, photographs, news clippings, political memorabilia and legislative artifacts dating back to the 1890s.

On November 2, 2007, the Bernice Ohnimus Crutcher Estate donated the items to the Assembly Chief Clerk's Office. Materials in this Collection have shed light on the history of the Legislature and the interesting life and times of Arthur Ohnimus.

ARTHUR A. OHNIMUS (1893-1965)

THE LONGEST SERVING ASSEMBLY CHIEF CLERK & FIRST FULL-TIME ASSEMBLY EMPLOYEE



Ohnimus with incoming Chief Clerk James Driscoll, October 1963. (Sacramento Bee photo)



Assemblyman Caspar Weinberger and Chief Clerk Ohnimus, 1954. (Sacramento Bee photo)



Left to right: Sergeant-at-Arms Tony Beard Chief Clerk/CAO Arthur Ohnimus Minute Clerk Eleanor Donoghue Circa 1963.