

IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REFERENCE SERIES

JOHN FROST NUGENT
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Although his parents were residents of Silver City, Nugent was born in La Grande, Oregon. His father was an attorney and a district judge of considerable eminence. The younger Nugent attended public schools in Silver City until he was 16, then dropped out. He had some practical experience in mining and also served as court reporter in his father's court. This latter activity took place at the time in which William E. Borah was becoming established in Idaho; Nugent's father's kindness to the young attorney was repaid as the judge's son read law in Borah's office. In 1896, a year after his marriage to Adelma Ainslie (daughter of George Ainslie), he took his wife to Australia for a year and a half where he worked as manager of some mining properties owned by an English syndicate.

After Nugent's return to Idaho, he was admitted to the bar and set up practice in Silver City. There he got to know Bill Haywood through the activities of the Western Federation of Miners and when the Steunenberg assassination investigation got underway he was asked by Haywood--through the financial secretary of the Silver City local of the Western Federation of Miners--to serve as part of the defense staff to watch out for the interests of the WFM. This he did--thus putting himself on the other side of the courtroom from his friend (or at least past friend) and mentor, Borah.

At the same time Nugent was getting involved in partisan politics. He was prosecuting attorney of Owyhee County from 1899 to 1906, and from 1908 to 1912 he was chairman of the Democratic State Central Committee. He ran for the Senate nomination in 1908 against Fred Dubois, with whom he had strenuous disagreements on the anti-Mormon question; he won party control but lost in the election (held in the Idaho Senate) to Weldon B. Heyburn, whose seat he would [rest of text missing]

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