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## History

# The investiture of Monsignor J.J. Papillon

A grand Willimantic event that occurred more than 60 years ago reveals the city's rich French-Canadian heritage. On St. John the Baptist Day, June 25, 1939, St. Mary's Church was the scene of impressive ceremonies that marked the investiture of Monsignor J.J. Papillon, the long-serving priest of St. Mary's. The numerous members of the local French-Canadian societies, and delegates from across Connecticut, joined 100 priests from all parts of Canada and Connecticut.

The pre-ceremony procession along Valley Street was highly impressive. It included uniformed members of the local St. Jean Baptiste Society and 100 priests in their colorful vestments. Monsignor J.A. Lallberts of Central Falls, R.I., presided over the investiture ceremony and applauded Papillon's 49 years of service.

More than 25 of the priest's



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relatives came down from Canada, including his brother, Emile, who was a Jesuit priest in Quebec. Also in attendance were three of his sisters from Canada, and a locally based sister, the Rev. Sister Mary Anne of St. Mary's Convent. Unfortunately, Papillon's 98-year-old mother, Anne (Lacroix) Papillon of Nicolet, Canada, was unable to attend.

The ceremonies commenced in St. Mary's at 10:30 a.m. All the speeches of the day were in French except that of the Rev. Father Burke of St. Joseph's Church, who expressed how the community loved and respected

the long-serving priest. After the church ceremony, several hundred guests assembled at Andrychowski's farm on Bricktop Road for a picnic, organized by the local St. Jean Baptiste Society.

At 7 p.m., a parish banquet was held in St. Mary's Hall in honor of J.J. Papillon. The guests of honor included the Mayor and Mrs. Pierre J. Laramee, H.O. Papillon, the Monsignor's brother and president of a law firm in Montreal, and several sisters and nephews. Attorney Harry Gaucher was the master of ceremonies for the evening banquet. Papillon was the first French-speaking priest in the Hartford diocese to receive such an honor.

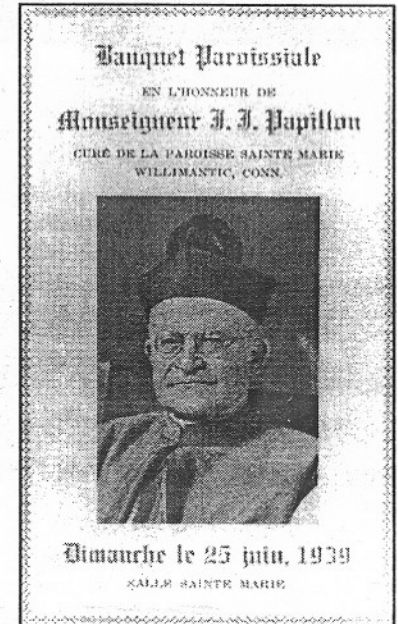
Papillon had been a priest in various Connecticut parishes since 1890, and he had served St. Mary's since 1910, just seven years after its construc-

tion. In 1940, Papillon was due to celebrate the 50th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood.

The Silver Rhythms band played the music during the evening in St. Mary's Hall. The singing was under the direction of Mr. Gaudreau, director of the church choir.

Mayor Laramee was the first speaker of the evening. Various members of the Papillon family followed with short speeches. The stage in the "Salle St. Marie" was adorned with a complex red and white floral arrangement prepared by the local St. Theresa Society.

The hall was packed with more than 300 people, and Papillon was visibly moved by the day's ceremonies, and at the conclusion of the evening he blessed all those present. It was a great achievement for Papillon and for St. Mary's Parish, and Willimantic, the



Francois J. Gamache

*The cover of the official program for the investiture of Father Papillon on St. John the Baptist Day, 1939.*

home of the Church's newest prelate.

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