

— HISTORY —

A friend of Dempsey's and a friend of the city, too

On Oct. 23, 1898, Adeline (Payeur) Bergeron gave birth to a baby son she named Florimond. The father, Romuald Bergeron, was a shoemaker and the family lived for a while on Willow Brook Street.

After leaving school, Florimond trained as a tinsmith, and for many years operated his own tinsmith business in the old Chaffee silk mill on the corner of Church and Valley streets.

Bergeron, however, became widely known thanks to his involvement in the local Democratic Party. He served as a city alderman, representing the third ward, was a member of Windham's Board of Assessors, served as Windham County treasurer and represented the town in the General Assembly.

After World War II, Bergeron was elected Willimantic alderman-at-large on the Democratic

ticket headed by Andrew J. Carey Sr. He was re-elected in 1947 and headed the ticket in 1949 when Carey decided not to run for a third term. Bergeron was re-elected mayor of the city of Willimantic in 1951, 1953, 1955, 1957 and 1959, thus matching the record of Mayor Danny Dunn who served six consecutive terms between 1905 and 1915.

Bergeron was an advocate of improvements to the city fire service, dating from his service on the fire committee, and implemented the city's mutual aid fire alarm system at the Bank Street headquarters.

He also lead failed attempts to build a new city library in the



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1950s, that was earmarked for the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Field.

Bergeron was also a close friend of Gov. John N. Dempsey, and this relationship helped to defeat attempts to take Eastern Connecticut State College away from Willimantic during the 1950s.

Beyond politics, Bergeron was involved in many organizations associated with St. Mary's Church, and he served for 35 years as president of the St. Jean de Baptiste Society.

He was also a member of the Elks and the Knights of Columbus.

Bergeron's active life was curtailed by a heart attack in the late 1950s, but he was still involved in local politics up until his death on Dec. 10, 1964, after attending a Willimantic Democratic Town Committee meeting.

Florimond Bergeron's funeral was highly attended, and local businesses closed for its duration so locals could pay their final respects to one of Willimantic's most active French-Canadian politicians since the days of Hormidas Dion.

The funeral service took place at St. Mary's Church and was



Florimond Bergeron, 1950

attended by his old friend Dempsey and State Adjutant General E. Donald Walsh. Members of the Willimantic Police and Fire Departments stood at attention as the funeral procession entered the church.

The Rev. Alfred Landry was celebrant of the solemn requiem high mass, and also in attendance were Francis Murphy, the pastor of St. Joseph's, and Leo Monette, director of the Immaculata Retreat House. Mrs. A. Louise Buckley was organist for the musical program, and soloists included Alexis J. Caisse, Edward Rocheville, Heliodore Boutin, Mrs. Eva Aubin, Mrs. Rita Trudeau, Donat Aubin, Arthur J. Roy and Ernest John.

One of Willimantic's most respected and well-known post war politician was thus given a fine farewell.

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