



THE HISTORY OF MAINE IN THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

RON SABOURIN : STATE HISTORIAN rrsabourin@aol.com

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: State Deputy 1916 - 1918

Our fourteenth State Deputy, James J. Neilon, was born April 12, 1871 in Peterborough, New Hampshire, the son of John Francis Neilon and Mary Junks Neilon. He came from a very devoted, religious family. Besides himself, there were one brother, John F. Jr., and two sisters: Reverend Sister Mary Blanche of Bangor; and Reverend Sister Mary Michael of Augusta. His family moved to Saco when James was a small boy, and it was here that he got a grammar school education. Later the family moved across the river to Biddeford.

James learned the barbing trade in Biddeford and operated the Neilon Barber shop for quite a few years. Later, he entered the laundry business with his father and brother, but later he operated this business by himself. This establishment was known as the Biddeford Laundry. He was always interested in civic affairs and distinguished himself in politics. He was an alderman from ward seven for three terms and later served as chairman of the City Council. He served two terms in the State Legislature from 1915 to 1919.

An active participant in fraternal societies; he was affiliated with the Portland Lodge of Elks for thirty-seven years and was active in the Holy Name Society of St. Mary's parish. Always interested in civic activities, he gave much of his time and financial support to several projects in the interest of his adopted city.

Brother Neilon joined the Manchester, New Hampshire Council No. 92, while working there for a short period of time. Returning to his home, he immediately organized Biddeford Council No. 260 on September 12, 1897. As a nucleus, he enrolled his father, John F. Sr., his brother John F. Jr., and his brother-in-law John Guiney as charter members. After holding all of the minor offices of his council, he was elected Grand Knight for three terms from 1911 to 1914. Retiring as Grand Knight he served his local Fourth Degree Assembly as Faithful Navigator for seven years from 1914 to 1921.

At the convention held at Waterville, May 9, 1916, he was elected State Deputy and served for two years. While State Deputy, he organized three councils, at the other end of the state: No. 1859 at Benedicta, No. 1870 at Caribou. He reinstated the defunct council No. 214 at Houlton, into the new Houlton council No. 1873. In 1926, he was appointed to the office of State Master of the Fourth Degree, which office he held for four years until 1930.

Brother Neilon died October 26, 1935 at the age of sixty-four. He suffered from a throat affliction and had taken treatment from a Boston specialist for several years prior to his death.

State Chaplain 1916 – 1918:

Rt. Rev. Msgr. Michael C. McDonough continues to serve as State Chaplain and serving as pastor of St. Patrick's church in Lewiston until 1933.

State Conventions 1916 - 1918:

State Convention for 1916 was held at Waterville on May 9, 1916. In 1917 the Conventions convened at Augusta on May 8, 1917. The convention for 1918 was held at Orono on May 14, 1918.