

## In Memoriam

# Judge Joseph A. Poirier

May 16, 1886 – July 19, 1942

This Memorial was presented by Judge William C. Larson

Joseph A. Poirier born on a farm near Appleton, Wisconsin, on May 16, 1886. He died on July 19, 1942, at the age of fifty-six. On September 22, 1924, he married Alice M. Turnbull. Their married life was a very happy one. His devoted and ever dutiful wife was a source of great inspiration to him and he loved and cherished her dearly. His wife, four sisters and one brother survive him. He was the third in a family of seven children.

His early boyhood days were spent on the family farm where he led a typical farm boy's life, attending the country school and taking part in sports and other activities. When he was twelve years of age, the family moved to Minneapolis, where he attended Minneapolis Public Schools

While still very young, and during this period of schooling, he was keenly interested in telegraphy, probably through frequenting a telegraph station near his home, where he observed telegraphers at work. He was also brought in contact with wireless telegraphy. As the wonders of the wireless intrigued him, he quickly mastered the codes. Upon completion of his public schooling he was quick to grasp an opportunity given to him to go to Alaska and work in the field of telegraphy. Following this, he was employed by railroads in Canada, United States and Mexico. Wireless telegraphy then brought him to the St. Louis Exposition, after which he traveled both the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans as a wireless operator, and saw much of the world.

One does not have to speculate to understand the reason for this activity when one considers how the world has been thrilled by the wonders of the wireless through messages carried far over the ocean **mists**, as if thoughts were being transmitted through the air.

In 1914, he returned to Minneapolis and joined the Northern Pacific Railroad Company, where he soon earned a promotion to chief of the entire telegraphic system of that company. While in this work, he registered for a course in telegraphic and telephonic engineering at the University of Minnesota. It was while he was in the employment of the Northern Pacific Railroad Company that he became interested in the study of law. Through an adjustment of hours, and a rigid application of his time, he completed a law course at the Northwestern College of Law, and passed the state bar examination in 1916. Shortly thereafter he became associated in the practice of law Mr. Marshall A. Snyder under the firm name of Snyder and Poirier. This association continued for about two years; then he practiced alone until 1924, when he was appointed Assistant County Attorney by the late Floyd B. Olson. Following this, and while Olson was governor, he was named Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Rural Credits Bureau in 1933, and during that same year he was placed in charge of the Personnel Division of the State Highway Department; a position which he held for three years. In 1937, he was appointed to the Municipal Bench of Minneapolis by Governor Benson, where he served until his death.

We knew that on an occasion of this kind, there is sometimes a tendency to indulge in extravagant eulogies of the departed. Perhaps this is because we instinctively feel for the dead the same consideration we hope for ourselves after death. Our departed friend had faults, and who has not, but his faults only served to emphasize the many fine qualities that he possessed. He saw those fine realities in humble men which many men are prone to overlook or cannot see. He was blessed with a generous nature and was ever ready to give an attentive ear and helping hand. In the trial and disposition of civil matters, a keen sense of fairness

and a desire to render impartial justice dominated him. His work in the administration of the criminal court was characterized by broad concept of human nature. His early experiences gained through contact with men of different nationalities, and in different stations of life manifested itself in his work as presiding judge over the Police Court.

In dealing with human flotsam and jetsam brought to this court by the tidal waves of social maladjustment he recognized good qualities in the most hapless derelict and often lamented the fact that a greater and more scientific rehabilitation program had not been achieved. While manifesting a very human interest in those who were brought before them, he was firm where public interest demanded it.

His religion was essentially a belief in the true brotherhood of man. He believed in the right of every man to follow his own religious beliefs and precepts according to the dictates of his conscience, when they did not interfere with the rights of others.

Even in the face of his prolonged illness, when he must have known that the odds were against him, he never seemed depressed

That he maintained a deep interest in the education and welfare of University students, was shown while he was Personnel Director of the Highway Department where he provided work for worthy students. He took a keen interest in the Minnesota football team, and gave many players were partially self – supporting, an opportunity for work during the summer months. The Minnesota Gophers, in acknowledgment of their deep gratitude, gave a dinner in his honor at which time he was given a wrist watch as a token of appreciation.

He was a member of the Odd Fellows Lodge, having gone through all its branches, and was also a member of the Eagles Lodge No. 1247.

Joe Poirier, as he was affectionately known by thousands in the community, will long be remembered for his genuine interest in the welfare of his fellow man.

## Appendix



County Attorney Floyd B. Olson and Associates,  
Joseph A. Poirier and William G. Compton.  
Minneapolis Tribune  
Hennepin County Library,  
Minneapolis Newspaper Photograph Collection.



**Floyd B. Olson Memorial Committee**

Plans for a permanent memorial to the late Governor are studied, (L to R): Carlo Brioschi is the sculptor of the State Relief Agency (SRA), Walter F. MacGregor is the administrative engineer of the SRA, Judge Poirier is the chairman of the committee, Miss Mary Engle, Allen T. Rorem and E. Boes Pfeifer is the consulting architect of the SRA.

**Minneapolis Tribune  
Hennepin County Library,  
Minneapolis Newspaper Photograph Collection.**



### Floyd B. Olson Memorial Service

A wreath is placed on the grave of the late Governor Olson in Lakewood cemetery by the Olson Memorial committee.  
L to R: Judge Poirier, Miss Mary Engle, Alderman Irving G. Scott, Miss Elizabeth Owens, assistant county attorney, and Nellie M. Severance.

Date of photograph: March 30, 1937.  
Minneapolis Tribune  
Hennepin County Library,  
Minneapolis Newspaper Photograph Collection.

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