

## **Barrett Brothers Park: Crossroads of American History** (rev. 4.10.08)

### **The Barrett Brothers**

The Barrett brothers were young men who lived and played in this north St. Louis neighborhood as boys. They gave up their lives during World War II, along with four of their cousins – all great-grandsons of Irish famine immigrants Patrick and Mary Barrett. The park was dedicated to their memory in 1947.

**Pfc. (Infantry) Francis P “Frank” Barrett, Jr.** (1917-1945) died in Germany on 17 Apr 1945 after the German defeat, during the last days of World War II (V-E Day was 8 May 1945). According to his cousin Kathleen Barrett Price, “He was walking down the street after the war was over and was shot by a sniper.” He is buried in the Netherlands. He was 28 years old, leaving his wife Marie behind.

**Marine Sgt. Florance “Florrie” Barrett** (1919-1944) died on 16 Dec 1944, in Guadalcanal, of leukemia at the age of 25. He saw action in the campaign of 1942 as an aviation mechanic. Apparently he knew he was ill, came home on leave, but chose to return to Guadalcanal. He was reburied 13 Jan 1949 in the National Memorial Cemetery of The Pacific, Honolulu, Hawaii.

Frank and Florrie Barrett were the sons of **Francis and Molly Curran Barrett**, 2519 Semple Avenue.

### **Immigrant Past**

The Barrett brothers were the great-grandsons of Patrick Barrett (abt. 1828-1905) and Mary Gardiner Barrett (abt. 1820-1906), both refugees from the Irish potato famine of the 1840s. Both were born in County Mayo and entered the U.S. at New Orleans. Here, many starving Irish were willing to do the dangerous work of digging canals and dredging the Mississippi River.

Mary Gardiner arrived with her brother, who soon succumbed to a yellow fever epidemic that killed 2400 people in New Orleans. She made her way to St. Louis on her own. Patrick Barrett also found his way to St. Louis, where the two met and were married in 1849. They lived near the riverfront on Green Street between Fifth and Sixth. Within five months of their marriage, the Great Fire tore through 15 blocks of the riverfront. Then the cholera epidemic hit, killing more than 4000 of the total St. Louis population of 64,000. About 1852, when the Barretts had seen enough, they moved with their first two children to farmland at Catawissa (Franklin County), Missouri – to a settlement of Irish immigrants known as Armagh – and built a log cabin near St. Patrick’s Church. The church is known today as “Old Rock” and has an active membership who celebrate their Irish-American history.

The Barretts prospered as farmers but not all their offspring were suited to rural life or the matriarchal dominance of Mary Barrett. Many of their flock migrated back to St. Louis.

### **Grocery Business**

The Barretts knew food. They hungered, they farmed – and then the St. Louis grandchildren went into retail.

- Starting sometime before 1910, Thomas Barrett owned grocery stores at 4841 Easton Ave [Martin Luther King Dr], 4865/4867 Easton, 5900 Cote Brilliante, and 1441 Rowan Avenue. The store on Rowan was family-run through the mid-1960s.
- Tom's brother Francis Barrett operated a confectionary at 5310 St. Louis Ave.
- Their cousin Thomas McLaughlin owned a grocery store on Easton Avenue.

In the 1940s, these three grocers sent five sons off to war, never to return. Their cousin Mary Timlin Pedrotti sent a sixth.

### **Sons to War**

In addition to Frank and Florrie Barrett, four other great-grandchildren of Patrick and Mary Barrett died during the course of World War II.

**USMC Pvt Francis Pedrotti** (1919-1941). Died 7 Dec 1941. Marine on USS Arizona, Pearl Harbor, when the Japanese bombed. His body was not recovered and is still listed as "missing in action/buried at sea." He was awarded a Purple Heart. *Grandson of Catherine Barrett and William Timlin; son of Mary Timlin and Dennis Pedrotti.*

**Private Robert Barrett** (1919-1942). Died 1 May 1942, in a plane crash in Utah, coming home on leave from California before being shipped out to the Aleutians. He was in the 32nd Infantry Band. *Grandson of Francis and Ellen Barrett; son of Thomas Barrett and Catherine Flanagan.*

**Pfc. Barrett McLaughlin** (1912-1944). Died 22 Nov 1944, in Germany. 175th Infantry 29th Division. Purple Heart Medal. Buried in the Netherlands. *Grandson of Mary Barrett and Michael McLaughlin; son of Thomas McLaughlin and Julie Kelly.*

**Thomas McLaughlin** (1926- abt 1945). MIA, last seen in Kommerscheid, Germany (declared dead in 1949). *Grandson of Mary Barrett and Michael McLaughlin; son of Thomas McLaughlin and Julie Kelly.*

**Barrett Brothers Park honors the memory of all six young men and reminds us all of the American story:** Poor, desperate people, driven from faraway homes, separated from their families, buffeted by the forces of history, find new meaning in hard work and service to their community and their country.

### **Follow-Up Contacts**

Kathleen Barrett Price, 314-647-6225, [kebp47@gmail.com](mailto:kebp47@gmail.com). First cousin of the Barrett brothers; parents in the north St. Louis grocery business; family historian and live memory.

Susan Barrett Price, 585-381-8439 (Rochester NY), [cosmorochester@yahoo.com](mailto:cosmorochester@yahoo.com), Kathleen's daughter and family historian and website writer. Additional details on the Barrett family history at [www.Barretts-of-Catawissa.com](http://www.Barretts-of-Catawissa.com).