

Mark Twain Resource Center Hip Hop Garden Groundbreaking, Barrett Brothers Park, 4/4/08

Remarks by Barrett Family Representative, Susan Barrett Price

Barrett Brothers Park was named for our cousins Frank and Florrie Barrett, who grew up in this neighborhood and who lost their lives in World War II. Actually, *six* Barrett cousins died in that war. Six young cousins went off to serve their country and then were gone forever.

All six were descendants of my great-great grandparents Mary and Patrick Barrett, who fled starving from Ireland during the potato famine, narrowly escaped yellow fever in New Orleans, and in St Louis, barely avoided cholera and the Great Fire of 1849. They wound up as homesteaders here on the Missouri frontier. The Barretts did okay as farmers. Then when some of their offspring moved back to north St. Louis in the early 20th century, what they knew best was food, so they went into the grocery business.

It's the great American saga: how *poor* people get tossed by the storms of history, but then find new meaning in hard work and good service. On behalf of the Barrett family, I want to thank Kyria for finding us Barretts and for having the imagination to see all the connections between this project and our family.

So... When you plant your garden in this park, your hands and your hearts will feel the spirit of the Barrett family.

If some of your plants *fail*, you might feel the shiver of helplessness, like the Irish did when the potatoes rotted in their fields. But the ghost of Mary Barrett will whisper that you always have another opportunity, if you *think*, and if you aren't afraid to do the hard work.

When your garden is *full* of vegetables, you'll feel the same thrill that the Barrett farmers and grocers did. When you see the dirt under your fingernails and smell the fragrance of fresh produce, you'll *know* the Barretts' simple secret of success – have a *plan* and *work* it.

Finally, on quiet, hot summer days, you may hear the laughter of the Barrett cousins as boys, the sound of their feet running across these grounds chasing a ball. And you'll feel a little chill – their dreams cut short as they march off to war, never to return. *These* ghosts will whisper their message about *duty* to family and to country. But they will also tell you that growing a garden is *better* than going to war.