

THE BYRNES FAMILY

Ireland to Rhode Island to Arkansas

The *O'Byrne* family goes back generations in County Wicklow, Ireland. County Wicklow lies just south of Dublin on the east coast. Where the O'Byrne or Byrnes family lived was a suburb of Dublin, Black Rock, County Wicklow, but has now been absorbed into the city itself.

Albert Michael Byrnes used to love the Opera, and he told of taking the trolley from his home into Dublin to see the performances; so Black Rock was very close to Dublin proper even at that time.

The name was changed from O'Byrne to Byrnes sometime in the 18th Century. The family came to America in the early 1850s to strike it rich in the California gold fields. The father, Michael, did not fare well, but his son, Albert Michael Byrnes my great grandfather, did as a builder. His daughter, Nell, married my grandfather, Leigh Reding Putman.

MICHAEL BYRNES

Michael Byrnes father, Peter Byrnes was a farmer in Ireland in the early 1800s. His son, Michael Byrnes, was born near Dublin in about 1830 and he married Charlotte Hatton in Dublin in the late 1840s and they spent the early part of their lives in Ireland. Michael Byrnes was a skilled wagon maker in Ireland.

They had a son, Albert Michael Byrnes, born in Dublin on August 2, 1849.

Michael Byrnes left his family in Ireland, and in 1852 crossed the Atlantic to America and then on to California, hoping to strike it rich in the gold fields. He spent two years there and then went to New Orleans. While in New Orleans in 1855, he came down with yellow fever and died.

ALBERT MICHAEL BYRNES

I believe Albert Michael Byrnes was an only child and was born about 1850 in the Black Rock section of Dublin, Ireland.

In 1864, when Albert Michael Byrnes was a teenager, he came with his mother to America. They spent a year in New York City and then he joined the expansion of the railroads and worked for four years in Springfield and other parts of southwest Missouri for the Frisco Railroad Offices.

His mother, Charlotte Byrnes, went ahead and settled in Fayetteville, Arkansas about 1866. Here she married her second husband, Joseph Zilleh and had two more children.

Albert Michael Byrnes left the railroad and came to Fayetteville in 1871. On January 14, 1872 he married Mary Elizabeth McCoy in Fayetteville, Washington County, Arkansas.

Mary McCoy was the daughter of Philip and Bridget McCoy, both natives of Ireland. Her parents met and were married in Providence, Rhode Island. Mary was born on April 3, 1854. The family moved to Prairie Grove, Arkansas in 1857 and settled on a farm. See the **MCCOY FAMILY HISTORY**.

A. M. Byrnes went first into the lumber business and then into the building construction field. In his career, he built over 300 buildings. These projects included buildings at the University of Arkansas, Banks, Offices and homes.

He built virtually all the buildings in the downtown business section of Fayetteville. A. M. Byrnes built all of the early school buildings, the first electric light plant, the Ozark Theater, the Washington County Jail and many buildings at the University of Arkansas.

He built the home he lived in for 63 years and the home of Leigh Reding Putman.

He founded the Northwest Arkansas Lumber Company that his grandson, Leigh Reding Putman, was later to join and then run. He was president of the very first Chamber of Commerce in 1892. He was a member of the first Board of Directors of the City Hospital and a director of the bank. He was indeed a leading citizen of Fayetteville.

Albert Michael Byrnes died on February 4, 1937. Mary Elizabeth Byrnes received a Papal Blessing on her 100th birthday in 1954. She lived to be 101 years old and died on August 7, 1955. Both are buried in Fayetteville, Arkansas.

The Byrnes had seven children:

DOROTHY 'DORA' BYRNES born in 1872. She married D. M. Benbrook who was widowed without children in 1907. She died in Krebs, Oklahoma.

MARY 'MAYME' BYRNES born in 1874. She married J. Wythe Walker. They had J. Wythe junior, James Byrnes and Courtney Walker.

HELEN THERESA 'NELL' BYRNES born in 1878. She married my grandfather Leigh Reding Putman and is covered in the **PUTMAN FAMILY HISTORY**.

ELIZABETH 'BESS' BYRNES born about 1879. She married Roy Dritt. They did not have any children.

EMMA BYRNES who married Bert H. Barnes and had a daughter, Betty Barnes.

ALBERT BERNARD BYRNES who married Mabel (?) and had two children, Michael and Martha.

ANNIE ALBERTA BYRNES who died at the age of twelve.