

Michael Francis Beirne & Anne Marie Gavigan
(1872-1948) (1871-1945)

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Michael Francis Beirne (1872-1848) and Anne Marie Gavigan (1871-1945) are my paternal grandparents. They lived in Lawrence, MA where they raised their family and associated with their respective brothers, sisters and other Irish relatives who also lived in that region. Michael and Annie Beirne were members of St. Mary's Church and are buried there in St. Mary's Cemetery. The area where the Beirnes lived is part of the Merrimack Valley that includes Lowell, Lawrence, and Haverhill, Massachusetts. (See also Patrick Beirne & Catherine Tansey chapter).

Lawrence, MA & the Irish Connection¹

This area (Lawrence & Lowell²) had been a social experiment conducted to determine whether or not America's Industrial Revolution could make an impact on the production of cloth and other materials for clothing as well as serve as a model for using labor in a meaningful way. The experiment was to utilize local labor by bringing young people (mostly girls and women) off the farms of New England to work in the Lowell and Lawrence area. This was a labor pool that was previously unused/lost for productive manufacturing. They were recruited from the farms to work in the mills. The mills had been located in this area because of the tremendous water supply for the required power generation and for the proximity to Boston and the shipping ports. The young workers were brought to Lowell and Lawrence, provided a weekly wage, and were provided housing in boarding houses that were run under strict rules to protect the young women. A small Irish community existed in the community in the 1840s that was of little consequence to the mill experience.

A series of potato famines ravaged Europe, and particularly Ireland, between 1845-8 and persisted until 1850. The Irish potato famine was actually a series of famines that hit Ireland beginning in the early 1840s with minor impact and culminating in "Black 47," an apt reference to the worst year. The survivors who were able to emigrate created a new labor pool. Many left Ireland and settled in the Lowell and Lawrence area. However,

1 Mitchell, Brian C. *The Paddy Camps: The Irish of Lowell 1821-1861*. Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1988.

2 Our great grandmother's (Mary Ann Leahy Kelly) uncle moved to Lowell from Sugar Ridge, PA; Nellie Kelly Bradley memoirs.

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the real attraction for this area was precipitated by a rebellion of sorts by the young women who were already working in the mills. They decided to strike for improved labor rates, which upset the equilibrium for the owners of the mills. The Irish, who were destitute after the famine, suddenly became an opportunistic resource for the owners of the mills who began to bring in more and more Irish people to work in the mills at the old labor rates. That was the environment that existed in the Lowell/Lawrence area of Massachusetts, which became a hotbed of Irish immigration because it provided so much opportunity for employment.

A very similar experience occurred in Endicott, NY. The new shoe factories spawned the development of that area, and Endicott in particular, by the Endicott Johnson Corporation (EJ). The opportunity to find employment and housing was a magnet for the hordes of new immigrants arriving in America just as Lawrence was for the Irish in the mid-1800s. Many of the new arrivals spoke no English but knew to ask “Which Way EJ?”

This was the environment that persisted in this area for the next 40 years creating a large Irish community dominated by two Catholic churches, St. Patrick's and St. Mary's. During the 1870s, the Irish population of Lawrence was 26% which was greater than that of Boston or New York City.¹ In the late 1900s, the area declined and mills closed. Over 150 years after this experiment (2004), an Irish software company moved part of its operations to the old mills of Lawrence and is in the process of new development for the area.

Anne (Annie) Marie Gavigan was born October 5, 1871 in Doughil (near Strokestown), Roscommon, Ireland. She was the oldest of four girls born to Patrick Gavigan (1829-1889) and Bridget Crowley (1841-1906) (see Gavigan and Crowley story). Anne was called “Annie” and I have used that as her name throughout this book. Michael Beirne was the 5th of nine children (8 boys and 1 girl) born in the area of Frenchpark (Diocese of Elphin) in County Roscommon (see above). It's an area south of Boyle and northwest of Athlone. It's on the upper western side of Ireland near County Mayo.

Annie had been trained to be a teacher in Ireland. Annie was the first of my paternal grandparents to come to the United States. She emigrated to America in 1892 when she was 21. She settled in the Lawrence, MA area to make her mark. According to several census records, she began work managing other people's boarding houses. Later, she was the catalyst for her and Michael's acquisition of other rental properties.

Michael arrived in 1893 and began work in Lawrence in the mills as a fireman. According

1 Blanchette, Joseph P. *The View From Shanty Pond*. Shanty Pond Press, 1999. p.13.

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to his "Naturalization Papers," He emigrated on the ship "Pavonia" from the port at Queenstown, Ireland (see Cork insert) and arrived at Boston on April 2, 1893. He was 21. According to the port records, he had one piece of luggage. He stated that he was from Ireland and his destination was Massachusetts and that he was a laborer. On one of my Irish visits, I met relatives of old neighbors in Ireland. They related that their families remembered that Michael Beirne was a strong young man who single-handedly cut an entire field for his parents on the day before he left for America and Lawrence, MA (1893). It is likely that they all knew that they would not see each other again after his departure.

SS. Pavonia

Michael Beirne arrived in Boston on April 3, 1893 after a voyage of approximately 10 days. He traveled on the "SS. Pavonia." That ship's itinerary was Liverpool to Queenstown to Boston. It left March 23-24, 1893. He had one piece of luggage and listed his occupation as laborer. His destination was Massachusetts. He was 19.

The SS. Pavonia was a passenger cargo vessel of the Cunard Steamship Company. Its main role was for round-trip transatlantic routes, primarily Liverpool-Queenstown-Boston. Her port of registry was Liverpool. The ship was built by J & G Thomson in Glasgow, Scotland. She was a 5,588 gross ton ship, length 430.5ft x beam 46.4ft, straight stem, one funnel, three masts (rigged for sail), iron construction, single screw and a speed of 14 knots. There was passenger accommodation for 200-1st and 1,500-3rd class. She was launched on 3rd June 1882. She left Liverpool on her maiden voyage from Liverpool to Queenstown (Cobh) and New York on September 13,1882.

On January 19, 1892, she arrived at Boston in tow of a Hamburg America liner (SS. Rhaetia) having broken her propeller shaft. On February 18,1899, she arrived at the Azores in a disabled condition and was towed to Liverpool for repairs. Afterwards, she started her last Liverpool - Queenstown - New York sailing on August 29,1899 and then made two voyages as a Boer War transport before being scrapped in 1900¹.

As advertised in the New York Times, the fees for cheapest cabin were \$35 per person. These were limited and the bulk of the passengers traveled in steerage. That is how Michael traveled so his fare is unknown, but certainly less than \$35. The ad states that steerage tickets from all parts of Europe were at very low rates.

When Michael and Annie separately arrived in the United States, the president was Benjamin Harrison who was succeeded by Grover Cleveland, William McKinley and Teddy Roosevelt. The

1 Bonsor, N.R.P.; North Atlantic Seaway, volume 1, p.153.

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country had 44 states with Wyoming as the last entrant. The Wild West was almost gone with the assassination of Sitting Bull and the Wounded Knee massacre in 1890 and the Dalton gang's fiasco in Coffeyville, KS in 1892. The great Chicago Fair introduced the "white city" to the world in 1893 and Roentgen would need another two years to discover the x-ray.

Michael Beirne and Anne Gavigan were born within 10 miles of one another in consecutive years (1871 & 1872 respectively). However, they never knew one another until they met in America. Annie was always sensitive to the fact that she was older than her husband.

Michael and Annie met when an accident occurred in the city of Lawrence in 1896. According to the story, there was a celebration that was occurring around Christmas with many people on the street. It was cold and Annie and a friend of hers were walking down the street. There was a Salvation Army band playing music and collecting funds for the poor. A bell was rung and a drum banged and the noise "spooked" a team of horses that was standing nearby. The team stampeded down the street from behind the two girls as they were strolling along. The girls were not expecting any problems and were unaware of the danger. A young man saw the impending accident, leaped to grab the bridles of the horses and stopped them. His action averted any injury to the ladies. As he was calming the horses, the girls became aware of what had happened and that this young man had saved them. This was Michael Beirne's introduction to Annie Gavigan and the beginning of their relationship of 49 years until Annie died in 1945.

As the years would unfold, they had starkly different views of their Salvation Army experience. In the midst of heated arguments, Michael would exclaim: "God-damn the Salvation Army!" Annie would retort: "God-bless the Salvation Army!"

It's interesting to note that some 46 years later a similar event occurred on Charles and Kitty Sammons' farm in Whitney Point, New York. David Sammons and I were placed in an old tin washtub in the heat of summer. A team of Clydesdale horses was spooked and



Anne Marie Gavigan & Michael Francis Beirne

(1871-1945)

(1872-1948)

Wedding Day: June 23, 1897
St. Mary's Church: Lawrence, MA



Commonwealth of Massachusetts

CITY OF LAWRENCE _____ COUNTY OF ESSEX

I hereby certify that the following is a true and compared copy of a Record of Marriage as Recorded in the original Records of the City of Lawrence, Massachusetts, which are in the custody of the City Clerk of said city. This marriage is duly recorded in the Official Marriage Records of said city in
Book 9 Page 74 No 271

GROOM

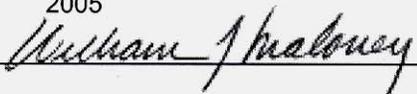
Name Michael Beirne
Age 24
Street and No. -----
City or Town Lawrence, MA
First Marriage
Occupation Laborer
Place of Birth Ireland
Name of Father Patrick Beirne
Maiden Name of Mother Catherine -----
Married By Rev. Alfred H. Valiquette
Place of Marriage Lawrence, MA

BRIDE

Name Ann Gavigan
Maiden Name -----
Widow or Divorced
Age 24
First Marriage
Street and No. -----
City or Town Lawrence, MA
Occupation Domestic
Place of Birth Ireland
Name of Father Patrick Gavigan
Maiden Name of Mother Bridget -----
Date of Marriage June 23, 1897
Date of Record August 2, 1897

I, **WILLIAM J. MALONEY**, City Clerk of said City of Lawrence, Massachusetts, hereby depose and say that the original Records of Marriage of said city are in my custody and that the above is a true and attested extract from said Records.

WITNESS my hand and seal of the said City of Lawrence, Massachusetts this 13th day of December
In the year 2005 A.D.



CITY CLERK

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stampeded through the lawn. The boys were pulled from the tub in the nick of time by Margaret Carrigg, a close family friend, who saved the boys from the potential disaster. The horses trampled the washtub.

During 1896, gold was discovered in Canada's Yukon province on the Klondike River. It precipitated the "Klondike Gold rush" that lasted through 1898. During the summer and winter of 1897-98, people stampeded to Skagway to find their fortunes. One of these was Jack London who made his fortune by writing stories based on his experiences. On January 1, New York City was formed through the merger of Manhattan, Brooklyn, Bronx, Queens and Staten Island. Also in 1897, Bram Stoker published "Dracula."

Michael and Annie were married on June 23, 1897 at St. Mary's Church in Lawrence, MA. This was one year prior to the sinking of the battleship Maine, which precipitated the U.S. attack on Spain in both Cuba and the Philippines. It was a war that brought Teddy Roosevelt to national recognition as the leader of the Rough Riders and was to set the stage for the era of "gunboat diplomacy" that would exist for the U.S. for the next 12 years or so. According to their marriage certificate, they were married by Rev. Alfred H. Valiquette, OSA and their witnesses were Owen Beirne (Michael's brother) and Angela Bannaher. At my father's (Jim Beirne) baptism, Owen is listed as his godfather and Agnes Bannaher as his godmother. This may likely be one and the same person (i.e., Agnes/Angela).

On their marriage license, Michael states that he was a laborer and Annie was a domestic. He made his declaration to become a U.S. citizen to the Lawrence police on November 15, 1898. It was approved and signed by the Essex County Police Court on November 15, 1905. His witnesses include John Beirne (his older brother) and Daniel Elliott. He listed his occupation as "fireman" and his residence as 43 Methuen Street. His act of becoming a citizen automatically did the same for his wife, Annie Marie Gavigan Beirne. At that time, women did not have the right to vote and, as a general rule, were not "naturalized" as citizens by themselves.

After they were married, they purchased a large apartment building of their own, which was managed by Annie and exclusively housed Irish people as boarders. The census of 1900 identifies all



Lawrence, MA
Apartment house owned by Michael & Annie Gavigan Beirne
Jim & Mary Beirne lived here during 1933-4 and Teresa Beirne Reidy was born here.

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Katie Beirne was a cousin who lived in Lawrence as a “maiden.”¹ She was also from Ireland and all of the Beirne boys watched out for her over the years. She was buried in Great Uncle John Beirne’s cemetery plot. The Lawrence property records for the Beirnes are summarized below:

Beirne Data Lawrence, MA City Records (1899-1920)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Author's Note</u>
1899	John Beirne	167 Lawrence	Moulder	Michael's older brother
1900	John	167 Lawrence	Moulder	
1901	John	115 Park	Moulder	
	John	24 Methuen	Laborer	
	Michael Beirne	24/26/ Methuen	Boarding House	Ken's grandfather
1902	John	43 Trenton	Moulder	
	Michael	24/26/ Methuen	Boarding House	
1903	John	43 Trenton	Moulder	
	Michael	24/26/ Methuen	Boarding House	
	Ellen Gavigan	245 Canal	Domestic	Annie Gavigan Beirne's younger sister (Nerney)
1904	Michael	66 Haverhill	Fireman	
1905	Michael	66 Haverhill	Fireman	
1906	Michael	5 Woodlawn Court	Fireman	
1907	Michael	5 Woodlawn Court	Fireman	
	John	333 Methuen & 43 Tre	Brass Founder	
1908	Michael	5 Woodlawn Court	Fireman	
	John	333 Methuen & 43 Tre	Brass Founder	
1909	Michael	5 Woodlawn Court	Fireman	
1910	Michael	5 Woodlawn Court	Watchman: Essex County School House	
1911	Michael	5 Woodlawn Court	Watchman: Essex County School House	
1912	Michael	5 Woodlawn Court	Watchman: Essex County School House	
1913	Michael	5 Woodlawn Court	Watchman: Essex County School House	
1914	Michael	5 Woodlawn Court	Fireman	
1915	Michael	5 Woodlawn Court	Fireman	
	John & Mary	47 Trenton	Moulder	
1916	John & Mary	47 Trenton	Moulder	
1917	John & Mary	47 Trenton	Moulder	
	Michael & Annie	73 High	Fireman	Ken's grandparents
1918	Michael & Annie	73 High	Fireman	
	James A.	73 High	Clerk: B & M Freight	
1919	Michael & Annie	73 High	Fireman	
	James A.	73 High	Clerk: B & M Freight	Ken's father
1920	A. Agnes	73 High	Clerk: Cashier's Office	Ken's father's younger sister (O'Sullivan)

1 October 1964; Maiden was the term used by my Aunt Agnes Beirne O’Sullivan to describe Katie.

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Michael Beirne walked miles to work when he was a night watchman and fire tender. He worked at Shawsheen Village which is located between Lawrence and Andover. It was an incredibly long walk for him to get to work and he did it round trip each day. His brother-in-law, Jimmy Nerney, had the same job but his was with another company that was much closer by.

They lived on Prospect Hill in Lawrence and Grandpa Beirne helped to build the St. Lawrence O'Toole Church. It was completed in 1902. After that, he also helped to build the multi-story apartment house that they owned. During that time he fell and broke his shoulder.

While working at Shawsheen Village, his boss was named Seaver House. Apparently Grandpa Beirne used to "raid" the rent money from Grandma so that he was always able to have some cash on hand to help his friends and have some drinks. His boss, Seaver, needed some money during the Great Depression so Grandpa Beirne loaned him some money. Later when he failed to repay it, Grandpa Beirne requested him to pay the money back. Shortly thereafter he was fired from his job and never recovered any of the cash.

Grandpa was known as someone who would "give them the shirt off his back." He frequently brewed his own beer in laundry tubs and then bottled it, and stored it in the basement. His grandson George really disliked having to carry the bottles downstairs as they often exploded.

He had a little poem¹ to record how he felt about his boss firing him:

When I had money, I had friends
I lent my money to my friends
I lost my money and my friends.

They often had meat and potatoes for breakfast as a main staple. Also, Sunday morning breakfast usually included beans and hot dogs because they were the leftovers from the night before. Everyone went to mass on Sunday, often riding in Uncle Bob Beirne's car. This would include Mike and Anne Gavigan Beirne, her sister Ellen Gavigan Nerney, and her husband Jimmy Nerney.

Several themes emerge from the history we have about the Beirnes. Grandma Gavigan Beirne was a big woman who cared a great deal for her children (James, John, Agnes, and Robert). James was the oldest and as such she had high expectations of him.

Alcohol played a major role in their household. The "noble experiment" (Prohibition) impacted all households, including my grandparents. It was intended to reduce alcohol consumption and lasted from 1920-1933. Initially, consumption dropped, but then it increased. The amateurs took over production as it moved from distilleries and breweries to the home. The actual alcohol content was increased in various home brews by spiking them with high-alcohol-content spirits.

¹ 1969; Agnes Beirne O'sullivan.

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Immigrants resisted being told that “they could not drink.” My grandfather was no exception.

Michael brewed his own form of beer in the family washtubs on a weekly basis. There was an ongoing battle between Mike and Annie about who would have access and use of the washtubs and on which days. Michael liked to “spike it” by adding a bottle of inexpensive whiskey to the washtub mix to raise the overall alcohol content beyond the norm for beer. On one occasion, Michael tried to make his own whiskey instead of purchasing more at the higher store prices. Whiskey production requires caramelized sugar. He did not have any available so he attempted to make the sugar, almost burning the house down in the process.

Once the brew was ready, he bottled it and stored it in a cool spot in the basement. The bottles needed to be transported to the cellar and that was a job for grandson George O’Sullivan or anyone else who could be utilized. Agnes said that George and the others disliked this task because it was dangerous! The “brew” was volatile and occasionally a bottle would explode during transit.

Mike Beirne used his homemade elixir for medicinal purposes whenever anyone complained of an illness. He would take the “patient” to the cellar and give them (and himself) several swallows



Beirne Family
Circa 1936 Tewkesbury, MA

Agnes Beirne O'Sullivan (1902-1974)	George O'Sullivan (1921-1980)	Anne O'Sullivan (1924-)
Robert Beirne (1906-1989)	Annie Gavigan Beirne (1871-1945)	Michael Beirne (1872-1948)

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to “cure whatever ailed them.” Aunt Agnes said that the illness often remained “uncured” but the patient, and the physician, always felt much better!

Aunt Agnes recalled that he was a very nice man when he was sober, but he was a mean drunk. The production of his brew was just one element of the whole issue. When he wasn't bottling it, he was consuming it, recovering from his behavior while consuming, or planning the next go-around. He drank on a regular and frequent basis and often times "switched" to new behavior after he'd had enough to drink. He became abusive and, on occasion, dragged both Grandma Beirne and Agnes O'Sullivan by the hair. On more than one occasion, he used a razor strap on George O'Sullivan who, by today's standards and information, would be viewed as an abused child.

There was considerable alcohol-related abuse in the family, and it's likely that James Beirne, being the oldest son of an alcoholic, received the brunt of it. Later in life, others would note that he was one of the only individuals who could break the impasse between his father and others in the family when he was in the midst of a drinking spree. Apparently, Jim Beirne did not require the need to get physical with his father to subdue him or restrain him in the way that Uncle John and Uncle Bob did. Jim's younger brother, John, ran away to the army at age 16, which may give some insight about the household dynamics.

Time did not improve Michael's behavior. During the 1938-42 timeframe, Annie Beirne was often embarrassed when Michael was frequently incapacitated with alcohol and incapable of walking home himself. The neighborhood kids would help Grandpa Beirne get off the bus and then bring him home.

For three weeks in September and October 1938, their oldest son and my father, Jim, arrived home, fresh out of the state hospital in Binghamton., NY. His situation added to her embarrassment as he would frequently rush out of the house to tell neighborhood acquaintances and friends about what had happened to him because of "Hitler Jack" and "Judas Mary." Mike and Annie provided him with an apartment to live in while “Ma” Beirne worked on getting him “fatted up.”

Aunt Agnes related that her parents made peace with the fact that their second child, John, had been party to the incarceration of their pride and joy, Jim, but she wondered if they were ever able to get over the fact that their daughter-in-law had to sign the papers to make it all happen. However, there is evidence that Annie was perceptive about her son and gave some bold advice to her daughter-in-law Mary.

Grandma Annie wrote a very kind letter (March 12, 1939) to Mary Beirne after Jim's last visit in Lawrence. This letter shows a different view of their relationship from Agnes's opinion. Annie had seen Jim first hand and heard his rebukes of John and Mary. She said in her note that she told him to stop the critical remarks because she did not agree with him. Jim did not like her response. Although this was a difficult situation, Annie and Mike had arranged for Jim to collect his family again and return to one of their apartments so that they could help Mary, the children and

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Jim. This would have been the second time. However, Jim walked out without any notice and Annie did not hear from him again. Her note indicates that she understood how difficult Jim could be and she was very sensitive to Mary. She advised Mary to “move on” with her life; that “she would be better off; and that she should just take care of herself and the children.” Jim was the oldest son and a favorite, so it could not have been easy for a proud Irishwoman and New Englander to do this. In just 6 years, Grandma would be gone.

Michael and Annie had four children:

- James Augustine (1899-1955)
- John Francis Aloysius (1900-1986)
- Ann Agnes (1902-1974)
- Robert Michael (1906-1989)

Michael Francis Beirne
 b. 29 Sep 1872, Ardmoyle, Kingsland, Frenchpark, Roscommon; Ireland
 d. 26 Jan 1948, Tewkesbury State Hospital; Tewkesbury, MA
 & Anne Marie Gavigan
 b. 5 Oct 1871, Doughil (Strokestown), Roscommon; Ireland
 d. 27 Apr 1945, B.Burke Memorial Hospital; Lawrence, Mass.
 mdy. 23 Jun 1897, St. Mary's Church; Lawrence, Mass.



James Augustine Beirne
 b. 28 Feb 1899, Lawrence, MA
 d. 21 Nov 1955, Alexian Brothers Hospital, Chicago, IL
 & Mary Regina Sammons
 b. 26 Mar 1907, Towanda, PA
 d. 2 Mar 1994, Ideal Living Center (Ideal Hospital), Endicott, NY
 mdy. 19 May 1932, SS. Peter & Paul, Towanda, PA



John Francis Aloysius Beirne
 b. 16 Dec 1900, Lawrence, Mass.
 d. 25 Jun 1986, Towanda, Pa.
 & Helen Elizabeth Kelly
 b. 24 Nov 1893, Kelly Hill, Forks Township (Sullivan Cty), PA; near Overton (Bradford Cty)
 d. 22 Nov 1986, Towanda, Pa.
 mdy. 29 Mar 1920, St. Patrick's Cathedral; New York



Ann Agnes Beirne
 b. 10 Jan 1902, Lawrence, Mass.
 d. 28 Sep 1974, Lowell, Mass.
 & George Daniel O'Sullivan
 b. 6 Apr 1899, Brooklyn, N.Y.
 d. 11 Mar 1983, Bridgeport, CT
 mdy. 27 Sep 1920, Lowell, Ma.



Robert Michael Beirne
 b. 17 Dec 1906, Lawrence, Ma.
 d. 3 Apr 1989
 & Florence Mary McCavitt
 b. 29 Mar 1899
 d. 31 May 1996, Lawrence General Hospital-Lawrence, Mass.
 mdy. 20 Sep 1942



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All the Beirne children attended the Rollins School¹ in Lawrence, each of them graduating from grammar school. Their individual records document their grades and John Beirne and Agnes are listed as graduates of high school. Robert is not. It's unknown where Jim Beirne attended high school though we do know from hospital records that he graduated and it may have been a Catholic high school, not a public.

Annie must have been well read and/or informed. She was proud of her Irish heritage. The middle names of her first two children (James and John) are in exactly the same sequence as the middle names of the famous Irish author James Augustine Aloysius Joyce (1882-1941).²

She was kind and practical. She had experience in the management and ownership of boarding houses. One of these had a “callable mortgage” with the bank. This meant that the bank could ask them to pay in full if another buyer offered to purchase for the full amount without financing it. During the 1936-7 timeframe, this happened. Mike and Annie did not have the principal and they lost the house to someone who paid cash to the bank. Fortunately, Annie had previously bought a separate home in her own name so they had a place to live.

My mother, Mary Beirne, told me about all of the homemade meals that Ma Beirne provided while Mary, Jim and the kids lived in Lawrence. She said that Annie would bring various meals in their entirety on a daily basis to help out. Mary observed that Ma Beirne boiled an entire chicken or turkey in a huge pot and then transferred it to the oven to roast it nice and brown. She also recalled that Pa Beirne worked nights and came home most mornings at breakfast time when he would have his dinner that usually included a huge rump steak.

Just as the Sammons and Kelly clan was tightly connected in Pennsylvania, the Beirnes and Gavigans were a tight clan in Massachusetts. Annie and Michael Beirne were known as “Ma and Pa” and she signed her letters Ma Beirne!

There was a lot of family interaction over the years among the various members of the Beirne

The John R. Rollins School



1 John R. Rollins School. John R. Rollins School Centennial Celebration 1892-1992. Lawrence, MA, 1992.

2 For additional information about James Joyce, see James Beirne (1899-1955) chapter.

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and Gavigan clan and their extended relatives. In addition to their immediate children, they regularly connected with John and Mary Beirne's family (Michael's older brother) and Jim and Ellen Nerney's family (Anne's younger sister). They all lived in the Lawrence-Lowell area. The fact that Annie operated boarding houses gave them additional room for people when it was needed. Between the timeframe of 1915-1942, there was a regular stream of people who came and went from time to time.

John Beirne left home in 1916 and would return after his marriage in 1920. His daughter Betty was born there. Jim and Agnes were living at home in 1919-1920. Agnes and her family lived there during the 1920-1940 era. Jim and his family lived there in 1933-1934 and when my sister Teresa was born in 1934. Jim returned to Lawrence in 1938 and again in the early 1940s after his splits with Mary. Michael's nieces (McGarrys) lived with them during the 1920s (see immigration insert). Bob Beirne lived at home through the 1930s and early 1940s; Agnes lived at home with her kids too. George O'Sullivan (Agnes' oldest child) returned to Lawrence to live with his wife and son, Dan, and lived there for some period of time.

Immigration

The Beirne and Gavigan relatives arrived in the US between the late 1880s and early 1900s. The Kelly and Leahy relatives arrived between 1838-1846.

A major change in immigration law impacted the Beirnes in Lawrence and their Beirne/McGarry relatives who remained in Ireland. During the 1920s, Mike Beirne and Annie Gavigan Beirne sponsored several of the McGarry children in order for them to immigrate to America.

From 1830 to 1900, the US had a very open policy for immigration and the number of immigrants was high and increased in every decade except for 1880-1890 (the number was 4 million). The number of immigrants in 1820-1830 was about 1 million. It rose to between 2 and 3 million each decade from 1840-1870 and then peaked at almost 9 million in 1900. After 1900, the number of new entrants remained high but declined each decade as a result of government policy changes.

The immigrant composition shifted after the American Civil War. Prior to that, most were from Western Europe and the British isles, including Ireland. In the 1870s, there was a new influx that included eastern (a.k.a Poles & Russians) & southern Europe (a.k.a. Italians & Greeks) as well as Chinese, Japanese and Koreans who primarily went to the West coast.

The older US population of immigrants were predominantly Protestant and from Western Europe. The new mix of immigrants were more Catholic

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and this threatened the older crowd who were well entrenched politically and socially. They clamored to restrict the flow of immigrants and to control “who gets in.” They organized and agitated for restrictions and a number of laws were passed regarding immigration policy.

A new literacy test was passed and emergency legislation was implemented. President Warren G. Harding signed the Immigration Restriction Act on May 19, 1921. This set a quota that limited the number of entrants to only 3% of the number of each nationality who was included in the US census of 1910. The immediate impact was to reduce the average immigrant totals from 800,000 to 300,00 each year. This was further tightened in 1924 by the National Origins Act, which changed it to 2% of the 1890 census and further discriminated against several major groups. This favored the Northern and Western European immigrants. It barred the Asians and stopped many Eastern and Southern immigrants. This law was used to exclude people from Eastern Europe during World War II. It was not repealed until 1965.

Immigration has risen each year since the Great Depression and exceeds 700,000 each year although the US population is much larger and the percent of foreign-born people continues to shrink.¹

Several of the family were of similar ages and congregated in Lawrence at different times where they were remembered as having fun times with considerable support of the local saloons. Bob Beirne (1906-1989) and Jimmy Nerney (1906-1960) were first cousins through their mothers: Annie Gavigan Beirne and Ellen Gavigan Nerney. They met Jimmy Kelly (1902-1959) in the 1919 timeframe when he was visiting. He was Bob Beirne’s brother-in-law (Bessie Kelly Beirne’s brother). This threesome convened in Lawrence for some serious partying on different occasions.

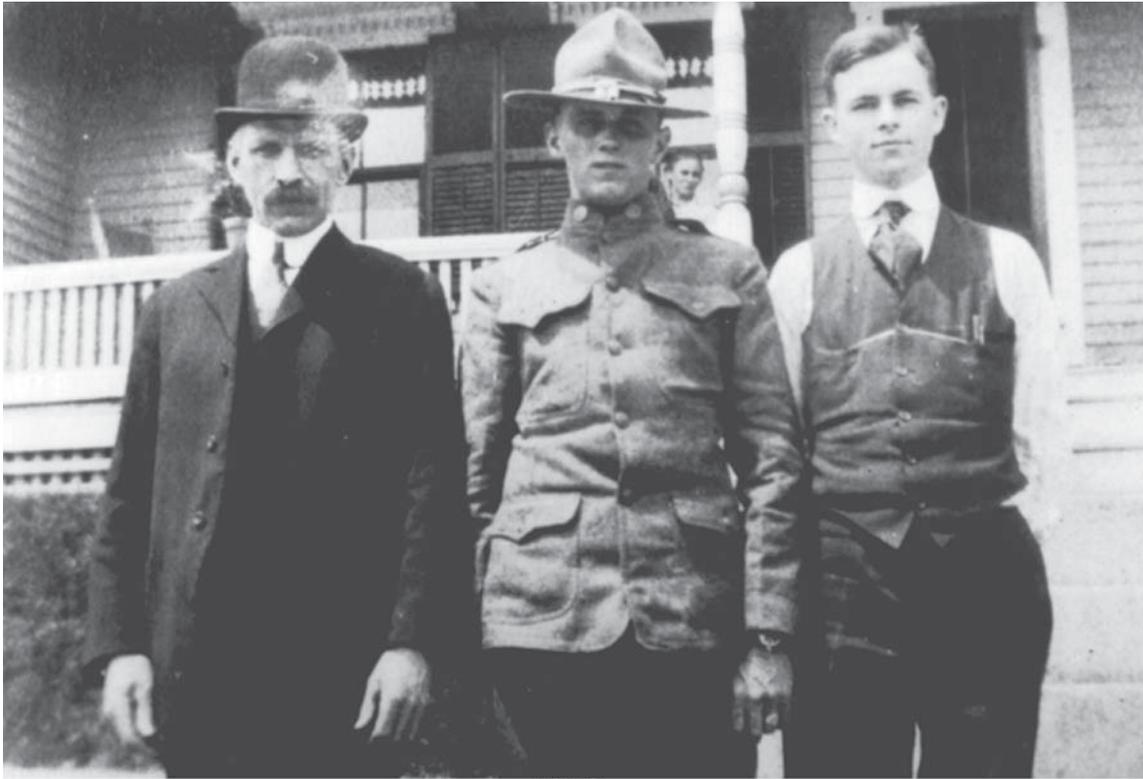
1945 was a particularly difficult year with the loss of Michael’s brother John in January, his wife Anne in April, Michael’s grandson John Beirne in May and his sister-in-law Mary (John’s wife) in August.

Annie had baby fine hair, false teeth, lumbago/arthritis and bad varicose veins. Grandma Gavigan Beirne had severe health difficulties at the end of her life. She had a massive coronary followed by two strokes all within six weeks in April 1945. The second stroke left her mute and paralyzed on the right side. She died on April 27, 1945, at B. Burke Memorial Hospital in Lawrence. Her address was 115 Woodlawn St.; Lawrence, MA. She was 73. Her death certificate states that she died of “Cardiac Asthenia; Chronic Myocarditis.”

When she was dying, Grandpa Beirne wept and exclaimed, "Annie, don't leave me!"

1 Information from Board of Curators, University of Missouri, 1965

The Best Things Always Disappear



1918

73 High Street
Lawrence, MA

left to right:
Unknown

Unknown

James Augustine Beirne
(1899-1955)

Seated on porch in background is Jim's mother
Annie Marie Gavigan Beirne (1871-1945).

for further information, visit www.beirne.com

Jim Beirne was devastated to learn of his mother's death and was bitter that he received the news after it was too late to attend her funeral.

At the time of his death, Michael Beirne was hospitalized. His daughter, Agnes Beirne O'Sullivan, told me about her care of him during this time. She was a nurse. He could not sit upright so she had to help him lift his head. She related to me that he would ask her for whiskey, even though he couldn't drink from a glass. She would position a sponge on his lips and then soak it with whiskey in an effort to comfort him.

Michael died January 26, 1948 at Tewkesbury State Hospital in Tewkesbury, MA of "Arterio sclerotic heart disease; cystitis". He was 75. His address at that time was 115 Woodlawn St.; Lawrence, MA. His occupation was recorded as Stationary Engineer on his death certificate.

Michael Francis Beirne & Anne Marie Gavigan
(1872-1948) (1871-1945)

Michael and Annie were members of the St. Mary's Church and are buried in their family plot at St. Mary's Hillside Cemetery in Lawrence. Their family grave plot was purchased March 27, 1900 when their address was 26 Methuen St. Michael's brother Owen was the first person to use the plot when he was interred there on March 20, 1900.

Annie Gavigan Beirne: Obituaries

Friday, April 27, 1945

Mrs. Anne M. (Gavigan) Beirne, wife of Michael F. Beirne, 115 Woodland Street, died Friday morning at the family home following a short illness. Born in Ireland she was a resident of this city for the past 53 years. She was a devout attendant at Saint Laurence's Church.

Besides her husband, she is survived by her daughter, Mrs. Agnes (Beirne) O'Sullivan; three sons, James A. Beirne of Chicago, Illinois, Lieutenant John F. Beirne in the US Service, stationed in Buffalo, New York, and electrician's mate Robert M. Beirne, US Navy, stationed in California; a sister Mrs. Ellen Nerney of Lowell; seventeen grandchildren including Lt. George D. O'Sullivan, Army Air Forces in Tampa, Florida and Mrs. Anne (O'Sullivan) Coffey of Lowell; one great grandchild; also several nieces and nephews.

The funeral will be held from her home Monday morning with a solemn high mass of requiem at 9:00 in Saint Laurence's Church. Burial will be in the Immaculate Conception cemetery.

Saturday, April 28, 1945

The funeral of Mrs. Anne M. (Gavigan) Beirne, wife of Michael F. Beirne, 115 Woodland Street, who died Friday, will be held from her home Monday morning with a solemn high mass of requiem at 9:00 in Saint Laurence's Church. Burial will be in the Immaculate Conception cemetery.

Michael F. Beirne: Obituaries

• Evening Tribune (Lawrence, MA) Monday, January 26, 1948

Michael F. Beirne, a lifelong resident of Lawrence, died early Monday morning at the home of his daughter, Mrs., Agnes B. O'Sullivan of Lowell.

Besides his daughter he is survived by three sons, James A., John F., Robert F., and several grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

The funeral will be held from the M.A. Burke funeral home Wednesday morning with a high mass of requiem at 9:00 in Saint Laurence's Church. Burial will be in the Immaculate Conception cemetery. Friends may call from 2:00 to 5:00 and 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

The Best Things Always Disappear

- Telegram Tuesday, January 27, 1948

The funeral of Michael F. Beirne, a lifelong resident of Lawrence who died Monday at the home of his daughter, Mrs. Agnes B. O'Sullivan in Lowell, will be held from the M.A. Burke funeral home, Andover, Wednesday morning with a high mass of requiem at 9:00 in Saint Laurence's Church. Burial will be in the Immaculate Conception cemetery.

Friends may call from 2:00 to 5:00 and 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

- Evening Tribune (Lawrence, MA) January 28, 1948

The funeral of Michael F. Beirne, a lifelong resident of Lawrence, who died Monday in Lowell was held in the M.A. Burke funeral home Andover, Wednesday morning. A high mass of requiem was offered in Saint Laurence's Church at 9:00 by Reverend Thomas F. Kalpin, O.S.A. The choir sang "Avie Marie" at the offertory and James J. Sayers, organist played Chopin's funeral march as the body was borne from the church. Burial was in the Immaculate Cemetery where Reverend Leo J. McCarthy, O.S.A. conducted committal services.

The bearers where: Joseph A. and Francis X. Beirne, James E. Nerney, George O'Sullivan, Joseph B. McCavitt, and Michael A. Huerlihy.

In addition to their four children, they had sixteen grandchildren. (See data sheet for details about themselves, their children and grandchildren).

THE VILLAGE BLACKSMITH¹

**Under a spreading chestnut-tree
The village smithy stands;
The smith, a mighty man is he,
With large and sinewy hands;
And the muscles of his brawny arms
Are strong as iron bands.**

**His hair is crisp, and black, and long,
His face is like the tan;
His brow is wet with honest sweat,
He earns whate'er he can,
And looks the whole world in the face,
For he owes not any man.
Week in, week out, from morn till night,**

1 H.W. Longfellow; recited from memory by Annie Gavigan Beirne to her children and grandchildren.

Michael Francis Beirne & Anne Marie Gavigan
(1872-1948) (1871-1945)

You can hear his bellows blow;
You can hear him swing his heavy sledge
With measured beat and slow,
Like a sexton ringing the village bell,
When the evening sun is low.

And children coming home from school
Look in at the open door;
They love to see the flaming forge,
And hear the bellows roar,
And catch the burning sparks that fly
Like chaff from a threshing-floor.

He goes on Sunday to the church,
And sits among his boys;
He hears the parson pray and preach,
He hears his daughter's voice,
Singing in the village choir,
And it makes his heart rejoice.

It sounds to him like her mother's voice,
Singing in Paradise!
He needs must think of her once more,
How in the grave she lies;
And with his hard, rough hand he wipes
A tear out of his eyes.

Toiling, - rejoicing, - sorrowing,
Onward through life he goes;
Each morning sees some task begin,
Each evening sees its close;
Something attempted, something done,
Has earned a night's repose.

Thanks, thanks to thee, my worthy friend,
For the lesson thou hast taught!
Thus at the flaming forge of life
Our fortunes must be wrought;
Thus on its sounding anvil shaped
Each burning deed and thought!¹

¹ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. *The Village Blacksmith*. 1885. E.P. Dutton; New York; given to Ken by his sister Teresa.

The Best Things Always Disappear

Michael Beirne and Anne Gavigan Family

order	birthdate	birth day	NAME	deathdate	death day	age		Cause	Other Medical
						yrs	days		
1st of 4	10/5/1871	Thursday	Anne Marie Gavigan	4/27/45	Friday	73	204	Cardiac arrest	Breast cancer & stroke
5th of 9	10/6/1872	Sunday	Michael Francis Beirne	1/26/48	Monday	75	112	Cardiac arrest	
	Children								
1	2/28/1899	Tuesday	James Augustine Beirne	11/21/55	Monday	56	266	Kidney failure-Pyelonephritis	
2	12/15/1900	Saturday	John Francis Aloysius Beirne	6/25/86	Wednesday	85	192	Cardiac arrest	
3	1/10/1902	Friday	Ann Agnes Beirne	9/28/74	Saturday	72	261	Breast Cancer	
4	12/17/06	Monday	Robert Michael Beirne	4/3/89	Monday	82	107	Cardiac arrest	Stroke
	grandchildren								
1	4/2/21	Saturday	Helen Elizabeth Beirne						
2	8/6/21	Saturday	George O'Sullivan	4/30/80	Wednesday	58	268	Cardiac arrest	
3	12/3/22	Sunday	John O'Sullivan	6/00/23	??	6mos		Crib death	
4	12/19/22	Tuesday	John Francis Beirne	5/15/45	Tuesday	22	147	Killed In Action-WW2	
5	12/9/23	Sunday	Virginia Marie Beirne	7/17/05	Sunday	81	220	Lung Cancer	
6	3/3/24	Monday	Anna Agnes O'Sullivan	4/28/06	Friday	82	56	Failure To Thrive; Alzheimer's	
7	11/22/25	Sunday	Michael Francis Beirne						
8	1/6/27	Thursday	Owen Thomas Beirne	11/8/98	Sunday	71	306	Advanced alcoholism	
9	4/14/28	Saturday	Daniel Beirne						
10	6/12/30	Thursday	Robert Joseph Beirne	8/17/95	Thursday	65	66	Cardiac arrest	Stroke
11	4/18/32	Monday	Patrick Leo Beirne						
12	5/15/33	Monday	Joseph Patrick Beirne	5/13/02	Monday	68	363	Lung Cancer	
13	5/15/33	Monday	Mary Beirne						
14	6/29/34	Friday	Teresa Josephine Beirne						
15	4/23/37	Friday	Michael Francis Beirne	6/20/83	Monday	46	58	Meningitis	AIDS
16	6/16/44	Friday	Kenneth Beirne						
								as of 5/4/2006	