Bridget & Joseph in 1918

Joseph P. Garland

DermodyHouse.com

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The main characters in this book are not fictitious. Most, as explained in the Introduction, are related to the author. Certain aspects of the story, though, are fictitious as are some of the locations.

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https://americanart.si.edu/artwork/june-222

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Introduction

Joseph Patrick Garland did not have things easy. His parents immigrated from Ireland. He was born on Manhattan's Lower East Side on March 1, 1888—he was baptized a bit over a week later at St. Brigid's on the southwest corner of Avenue B and Eighth Street—and his father, Patrick Joseph Garland, came from the farm town of Portarlington, County Offaly, south-southwest of Dublin (to which one can now get numerous trains a day for an hour-and-fifteen-minute ride to the capital). Patrick died in New York on February 7, 1890. He was not yet thirty-six. Joseph was not yet two.

Joseph's mother, Ellen Hickey, was also from Ireland but I do not know where. She died in 1897. I do know that she and Patrick had a second child, another boy, named Samuel after Patrick's father. Samuel too died in 1890. My great grandmother, then, was widowed while pregnant with a child who would not survive the year. Her sole surviving child, Joseph, was under ten when she died. When Ellen and Patrick came to America I do not know though because he was born in 1853 it must have been after the harshest Famine years.

With both his parents dead, Joseph ended up in a Catholic orphanage on Madison Avenue, where he is listed as an "inmate" in the 1900 Census. By 1910, he again lived on the Lower East Side; we find him there in the 1910 Census. In 1917, he told the draft board that he worked as a clerk in what was then New York City's diamond district, on Maiden Lane near Wall Street, and that he lived on Ridge Street, which, since the census only lists men there, I assume was a boarding house.

Bridget Dermody was born on August 22, 1888, on the Lower East Side and was baptized eleven days later at St. Mary's Church on Grand Street. (To give a sense of the density of the Irish Catholic population at the time, the events in this story take place at St. Rose of Lima Church (now gone), and it was only a few blocks from St. Mary's (still there).) Bridget's mother, Mary Ann Kenney, came from Rock Island, Illinois, just west of Chicago, though both her parents were from Ireland, but I don't know where. Her father, Thomas Dermody, was, I believe, born in New York City—which did not

include Brooklyn and Queens until 1898—and his parents, too, were from an unknown part of Ireland (at least "unknown" to me, it being difficult to know in this case which "Dermodys" are my "Dermodys"). She had an older brother, John, born in 1886. John never married.

Bridget's father died when she was ten months old, in 1889. Her mother remarried in 1890 and became Mrs. John Campbell, and Bridget, also known as Delia (as my brother reminded me and as becomes useful when looking at census records), became Bridget or Delia Campbell. By 1910, she lived only a few blocks from Joseph. The 1910 Census lists him two pages away from her. The 1910 Census also lists Bridget (Delia) with her older brother John as well as five half-siblings. The census form for that year asked of women how many children they'd given birth to and how many were still alive. For Mary Campbell (my great-grandmother, also known as Maria) Campbell, it was twelve born and seven still alive in 1910. (In 1900 there was a similar question, and for Mary then it was nine and six.)

Bridget and Joseph married on June 15, 1918, at St. Rose of Lima Church near where they lived. It was a heavily Irish neighborhood just on the southern side of the ramp to the Williamsburg Bridge, which opened in 1903. The church is now gone. It actually was razed to make way for the bridge, and the Diocese gave the "St. Rose of Lima" name to a church in northern Manhattan. Demand on the Lower East Side, however, was such as to require building a new church after the bridge was completed, which is where the events described here took place.

Joseph entered the Army on the same day he got married, June 15, 1918. He was discharged on January 2, 1919, without going to Europe.

This is what we know. This story was inspired by the fact that the marriage and the enlistment took place on the same day. It attempts to piece together how they came to be a couple.

* * * *

My father (also Joseph) took “Dermody” as his middle name. I took Patrick as my Confirmation name.

Joseph P. Garland II

Thanks to Renée Gendron (@ReneeGendron) for her invaluable editing comments.

June 15, 1918

At 1:56 on the afternoon of June 15, 1918, thirty-year-old Joseph Patrick Garland stood on the east side of Park Avenue between Sixty-Sixth and Sixty-Seventh Streets looking up at the low, squat yet imposing armory that dominated the street. Then, he said goodbye to his wife of under four hours. This was not how they intended their wedding day to be, and it was far from what they expected their married life to be. But it was.

Both of his parents were from Ireland, and both died before he was ten. His only sibling was a brother, and he died shortly after being born and not long after their father did. After residing in an orphanage—an asylum as the nuns called it—way up on Madison Avenue until he was eighteen, he ended up on Manhattan's Lower East Side, not far from where he was born. It was a community largely defined as members of the St. Rose of Lima's parish close by the East River, much of it in the shadow of the Manhattan side of the Williamsburg Bridge.

His bride, Bridget Campbell, born Bridget Dermody, was a member of the parish. Although her father died when she was a mere ten months old, her mother remarried John Campbell before Bridget turned two. It was his first marriage, and the pair would have a flurry of children together.

Bridget became a Campbell, and it happened that they lived only a block or so away from Joseph's boarding house on Ridge Street. She was born in 1888—as was he—and would turn thirty before the end of summer of 1918.

Joseph had a small room in the boarding house. It faced to the south, looking out across a small courtyard to the neighboring building. It was not much of a view, seeing nothing but the corresponding windows of the similar building across the way, but Joseph was long accustomed to it. His room was on the fourth floor and thus was just high enough so that in the summer the sun reached his window.

It was lightly furnished—it could not be otherwise given its size—with an iron bed and slight mattress, a small table and a chair plus a wardrobe and dresser. He did not have many things, and he had more than enough storage for what he had. The walls were painted in a light blue and over the years he obtained several prints of New York streets or the Irish countryside and a dreary one of an Irish farming town that he imagined resembled the one that his father left for reasons he never would know, which he hung on its walls.

Joseph had a solid if low-paying job, working as a clerk in a company on Maiden Lane that made jewelry. It was the city's jewelry district, and his company was on the seventh floor of number 15, which it shared with several other jewelry firms. He got along well with the other clerks and with the artisans who made the pieces, and at lunchtime he and the clerks would pile into the elevator and walk to one of the cafeterias nearby. On nice days, they might get something at one of the pushcarts and hope to find a place to sit and eat in one of the small parks that dotted the area.

Being of a taciturn nature and slightly older than the rest, he was far from the loudest of the group, but he was well liked and often found himself being sought out for advice as to this lass or that lass—the clerks were all Irish—that had broken a heart.

His own heart was broken more times than he cared to remember but it did not do to dwell. He lived in a neighborhood that amounted to combining swaths of Ireland in a tenth or a twentieth of the space on that island. It was thus a very dense small town, one among many in Manhattan with immigrants from countless places, so he saw his neighbors, including the women who one after the other were the objects of his unrequited affections, often. Each time he failed with a woman, he spent more than a few Saturday nights at O'Connell's on Grand Street examining where he went wrong over a good German stout with the sympathetic mates in his sometimes sad little group.

O'Connell's was a fine tavern a few blocks to the west of his boarding house, over on Grand and Clinton. The current "Mr. O'Connell" was well along in years. He was the grandson of the Mr. O'Connell who opened the place, and the current Mr. O'Connell was

never happier than when he wandered about stopping to say hello and chat to friends and strangers alike. He was a small man and his wife, the formidable Mrs. Gertrude O'Connell, was larger than him and although she was of German extraction, she'd long since been adopted by one and all as if she were baptized in the Liffey and their oldest son was expected to carry on with the family business.

Like all the men and most of the women in the St. Rose parish, Joseph followed the events of recent years closely. Saturday nights at O'Connell's were often spent discussing news reports of the Easter Rising in 1916 and even more what was happening in France since 1914. For some time, they were convinced that, as Wilson said, they'd be kept out of the thing. There were lots and lots of Irish in New York, few of whom had a good word to think, let alone say, about the British, and a fair number of Germans, many of whom Joseph knew from his work in the jewelry district downtown.

It was all a mess, and Joseph and the others were not so naïve as to think they'd not be affected. So, they read the stories from the Somme and Ypres and the other places and of the bodies piled on top of one another and prayed that whichever side was going to win—it did not matter to them which side it was—would just be done with it.

But the pressure to join the hostilities grew and grew and the German cause was not helped when a U-boat sank the Lusitania back in 1915, its survivors taken to Queenstown outside Cork City, where many if not most of the Irish in America last set forth in Ireland. Then in early '17 the Germans intensified their war in the Atlantic against American shipping to Britain, believing victory itself was within the Kaiser's reach.

Instead, it forced President Wilson to admit he could no longer keep America out, and war it was. Joseph did his duty and registered for the draft in 1917. He doubted that they'd want a nearly thirty-year-old clerk and even if they did, he figured he'd not be given a rifle but would be posted somewhere to shift papers from one pile to another. As more and more of his fellows were called up, he remained out of it into 1918.

And then, somehow, he found himself in Bridget's world. Bridget Campbell had three things that made her dangerous to a man, especially an Irishman. Long, silky dark brown hair that draped well below her shoulders (and beneath one of the hats she fancied) and a smile whose shine was matched by its mystery. And blue eyes that would have tempted Adam if Eve hadn't already ensnared him with that apple.

She was born in New York, as was her father, but her mother was from outside Chicago. All of her grandparents were from Ireland. One by one her friends married and the little group of five or six was supplemented over time by several bouncing babies and then toddlers who were passed around among the women as that sat in the southwest corner of a park on Clinton Street on Saturday afternoons. More than a few bachelors preened around, hoping for the attention of one of the unmarrieds. The marrieds were free with their suggestions about the men who paraded in front of them. And they were liberal with comments about any other single man who came to mind, and Bridget was always quick to dismiss their suggestions of who she should finally get around to marrying.

Subtlety was not among the group's strengths when they were together and more often than not, they'd break into laughter at the ridiculousness of the men they saw or spoke of.

Bridget remembered laughing when Deidre Connolly threw out Joseph's name in the early spring of 1918. Winter had kept them largely indoors, and it was one of the first chances the women had to resume their sitting in the park. His was simply another name thrown around, and Bridget dismissed it as she had with the others over the years. It was serendipity, then, that Joseph was among a crowd that passed across Broome Street from St. Rose's as ten o'clock mass was being let out the next morning while she stood at the top of the church's steps. It was a loud, rowdy bunch, apparently having won its match. There they were, in their blue shirts and white shorts, covered with mud and perhaps a bit of blood heading, she expected, to O'Connell's.

That his name was mentioned the day before is probably why she noticed him at all. He was towards the back and as jolly as the rest and he and the rest went by with barely a glance at the congregants.

That night, after helping her mother clean up and sitting in the small living room where she and her mother and stepfather spent their leisure time—and her brother John if he was not out at some tavern or another—Bridget was reading a romance. She put it down and interrupted her mother's sewing.

"Mama," she said, "What do you think of that Joseph Garland?"

Mrs. Campbell looked up, and so did her husband.

"I've seen him, but he does seem awfully quiet."

"Quiet, yeah" Mr. Campbell said. "He seems a nice enough lad when I see him at O'Connell's. A decent athlete I'm told."

Both the Campbells knew to say no more but they did look at one another as Bridget returned to her book.

She thought him handsome enough—he was medium sized and slim with very nice hair, and he wore a suit quite well. From what she could tell as he went by, he wore a football uniform quite well too. Later that night she asked her brother about the blue uniform, and John said it was one of the Gaelic football teams that played in a park down by the river.

"They're one of the better teams, though not quite the best. They usually play on Sunday mornings. Why do you ask?"

"I just saw them pass when we were leaving church," she said, and John let it drop, although not before he told her when they next played.

The Early Mass

Bridget went to the eight o'clock mass by herself the following Sunday, promising her mother she'd make up for it. Her mother, not being a fool, was happy to give her dispensation.

John said the blue team was playing that morning, and Bridget went to see it. She had no idea about the game. They were playing against a group in Kelly green. So far as she could tell, it amounted to a lot of running around and throwing a ball and sometimes kicking it and smashing into one another.

She focused on Joseph. She was surprised at how assertive he was, in such contrast to how she imagined him. Rushing and throwing himself against someone in green. Seeming to spend more time on the ground than on his feet. When he was close enough for her to take a good look at him, she saw his face, arms, and uniform were streaked with mud.

She left before the game was over, having promised her mother she'd help with dinner. As she crossed the street that bordered the pitch to the west, she took a last look back, but the players were all a muddle of shouting and activity, and she was unable to pick him out.

He seems interesting, she thought as she walked to Heller's, a German bakery where she could get a pastry to break her fast, which she gobbled down somewhat awkwardly but ravenously as she continued home in her Sunday best. When her mother asked where she'd been, she said, "I wanted to get some air down by the river and then saw a game, so I watched it, but I didn't understand it."

With that she went to her room and changed and was promptly back with her mother in an apron peeling potatoes in silence.

"She Was Watching You"

"I know she was watching you, Joe," said Pat Conroy. He and the other members of the blue team, which had beaten the greens by a whisker, were sitting along the side of the pitch.

"Aye, Joe. Never seen her here before but you were definitely the one she came to watch." This was the newly married Martin Doyle.

Joseph did not recall having noticed Bridget Campbell before. He saw her around and smiled to her when they passed on the street as he did with any other pretty girl he passed. And he surely thought her pretty (as did most everyone else), and that morning she was hard to miss in her bright red dress. But he had no reason to think she was interested in any of the players, let alone in him. He was too busy playing to be wondering about her.

The topic of Bridget's interest quickly passed among the players as they rose to head over to O'Connell's where they'd celebrate their victory. They waved and gave cheers to the team in green, which would be commiserating in another tavern. The bunch, dirty and sweaty, were, as they walked, near tasting the first sip of ale that sweet (notwithstanding her stern exterior) Mrs. O'Connell be bringing them. A good German stout that would fill their stomachs and leave them glad for it.

Because the team did not have a game the next Sunday, Joseph went to the ten o'clock mass. He'd asked around. It was the one to which the Campbells went. While on Sundays he was generally lackadaisical about himself, this particular time he took special care in shaving in the communal bathroom on his floor. He'd pressed his best suit, the dark blue one, in the basement and wore the newest of his white shirts and the best of his ties, a red one. He hadn't thought to get his shoes polished so he did what he could to make them presentable. He was at St. Rose's early and entered as soon as the prior mass let out, finding a seat in a pew towards the rear.

Bridget noticed him immediately when she and the rest of the Campbells, excepting Mr. Campbell and John, filed into the rear. They went to the left and down that aisle as they always did. There was an

empty row about halfway up. Just as they turned down the aisle, she got a good look at him sitting by the center aisle, two or three pews from the last. He was paging through the missal—or pretending to—and kept swiveling his head left and right and to the rear before retuning briefly for a glance at St. Paul or St. John or St. whomever before repeating the dance.

Which he did several times before being rewarded by the sight of her entering with her mother and turning to the aisle that ran up the left side of the church. The sight caused him to dive back into the missal and its assortment of prayers and readings that suddenly seemed captivating.

Got you, she thought with a smile and when she led her mother into the pew after genuflecting, she stole her own glance to the rear with the pretense of looking at the organist and caught *him* again before he dove back into the missal. When she was sitting after kneeling for a brief prayer, her mother asked why she seemed so happy.

"I will tell you later, mama," she said, leaning close. Before that, she doubted he made the connection between her being at his match and him, but she now knew he had. She didn't recall ever seeing him in church before and imagined that he was one of those who had no idea when to stand or sit or kneel and would have to wait for those who did know and follow them.

Throughout the mass, she felt his eyes upon her. When he went to get communion, it was her turn to study his back. As he passed her pew, she nudged her kneeling mother and nodded over. She watched him return to his seat.

As the Campbells left, Joseph stood off to the side pacing back and forth in little circles. Bridget gave him a discreet wave as her family headed for home. Her mother interrogated her *en route*.

Bridget and Joseph did not see each other during the week. Joseph was angry with himself for not being more forward after mass. He had a game the following Sunday at ten, so he promised that he'd approach her at mass in two weeks if he did not see her sooner. He was surprised, then, when she appeared at the side of the pitch shortly before that game. He hadn't noticed her, but Pat Conroy

again did and gave Joseph a nudge and when he looked over, she gave him—yes, him—a wave. He had time so he jogged across the field to her.

"I went to an early mass," she said. "May I watch?"

She was wearing a plain dark skirt and simple blouse with a jacket, and her hair was up beneath a small brimmed white hat with a maroon ribbon. It was too casual for church.

"I'd like that," he said and turned to run back to his team and survived the ribbing that hit him when he did and eventually overcame the nerves that overtook him at the thought of her watching him on the sidelines. She receded largely to his memory as he was caught up in the game and performed, he thought, well though they lost. Rather than sitting with his mates, when it ended, he picked up his satchel and ran to where she stood.

"I don't know the game," she told him, "but you looked very good at it."

"Aye, but we lost."

"Have you something to wipe off the mud?"

In his hurry, he neglected to pull out his small towel to at least get the worst from his face and now he pulled it out and attempted to make himself presentable. As he began to put the towel back into his bag, she grabbed it from him. It was done without thinking, and she ran the cloth along his right cheek to remove a slight streak of mud and turf and returned it to him.

"Much better." She looked down, and they walked together, though not to O'Connell's, as his teammates watched the pair of them heading south to Henry Street.

Nervously Waiting

That was in the spring of 1918. From that point on Joseph went to mass with the Campbells when he had no game—Mr. Campbell appeared once to inspect him—and Bridget went to an early mass and changed and walked down to the pitch when he did. And they walked together whenever they had the chance.

They spoke of the war, inevitably but not often. There was only so much that could be said though it occupied them both. She knew that he and all the others in the neighborhood had registered for the draft, but he assured her that he was too old. Indeed, the casualties and deaths that started being announced in the parish since the beginning of the year—not many as yet—were all of men, boys really, well younger than Joseph. Both feared he'd get called up, and they hoped that in that case he'd be given some job well away from the fighting.

Each day the War Department letter summoning him did not come. Surely the appearance of the Americans would put an end to the damn thing and even with the regular news of the fighting, the was far from the couple's surface as they became more and more familiar and comfortable with each other. On those days when Joseph went to mass, he joined the Campbells for dinner. Mr. Campbell liked him well enough, and John came to think him a fine fellow.

Most importantly, Mrs. Campbell took to him, and he sometimes bristled at her mothering. At times it seemed she tried in an afternoon to make up for the two decades since he lost his own mother, Bridget having told her quietly when they were alone that he'd grown up mostly in an asylum. Bridget would laugh with him about it—"she means well"—when they strolled after eating, at times taking Florence or Harold, Bridget's youngest half-sister and half-brother, along to get sweets or some such at one of the few open stores on Grand Street. More often they were alone together on the Sunday afternoons, with it staying light later and later each week.

In early May, Joseph made a particular effort. He didn't think Bridget noticed but she did. After eating at the Campbells, it was not yet four and they walked east. It was a good walk on nice days, along the river, and they took it often, one of the many couples that did. They saw an empty bench on the promenade.

He stayed on his feet when she sat, and he looked to either side at the couples oblivious to them. He dropped to a knee, and she was shocked that he finally was doing what he was clearly doing, and after some fumbling, she said yes and he gave her a Claddagh ring, the point of the heart towards her left fingers as a sign of the engagement. The couple announced it to her family at supper later that afternoon—Mr. Campbell already having given his consent—and the Campbells were not surprised and were quite pleased.

Then came the letter from the Department of War.

Summoned

He did not need to open the envelope Mickey Dolan held up to him to know it was bad news. Joseph was returning to his boarding house in the early evening of a Thursday in late May when Dolan, the house's porter, called him over. This distinctive seal of the Department of War was plain as day. Everyone in the house knew what it meant.

Joseph took the letter and, still in his work suit, headed right out the door. He went at a pace between too fast and too slow the two blocks to the Campbells'. Bridget was home from her work as a typist for a law firm on Forty-Fifth Street. She still lived with her parents but that would all change in September, when she and Joseph were married.

Mrs. Campbell directed him to the family's small sitting room when he knocked so unexpectedly, and she went to get Bridget, but Bridget was upon them before Joseph moved. She noticed the envelope in his right hand and grabbed his left to pull him into the hallway. Her mother closed the apartment door behind them.

It was a dreary hallway, but that did not matter.

"Did you open it?" she asked.

"I thought, well, we should do it together," he said as he held it up. She took it and after a breath ripped off one side and after an effort it was open, and she pulled the letter out.

"June 15." She handed it to him.

"All other business being put aside, you are to report," he read aloud but quietly, "to the Armory at 643 Park Avenue at 2 o'clock in the afternoon of Saturday, June 15, 1918, to be inducted into the United States Army."

There was more official language about what he was to bring and such but that was the essence.

"It's not much warning," she said. "What shall we do?"

They heard someone climbing the stairs and returned to the apartment. Bridget's mother and stepfather were in the small living

room, and Florence and Harold came in when they heard the door open.

"Mr. Campbell. Mrs. Campbell. I am to report for duty on June 15. I think," and he looked over at Bridget, who nodded, "that Bridget and I should get married as soon as possible."

"So soon?" Mrs. Campbell said.

"The Army does what the Army does, my dear," her husband said as he rose to take Joseph's hand. "I'm sure you'll be safe."

The four adults sat, and the two children headed back to their rooms.

"I'll be praying for you, that's for sure. As to this other thing, I'm sure Father Murphy can work something out," Mrs. Campbell said.

"You two are not the first he'll have to accommodate," her husband said. "The four of us will have to see him on Saturday morning."

Bridget turned to him.

"Do you think he'll waive the banns?"

June 15 was just over two weeks away, and there was not the three Sundays normally required to read the banns for the wedding, but Mr. Campbell assured her that Father Murphy was an understanding sort.

"But mother, I shall not have my dress."

"Bridget, I'm sure Mrs. Sullivan can accommodate you."

St. Rose of Lima

St. Rose itself was a relatively new church if not a relatively new parish. This church succeeded its prior version, which found itself in the path of the entrance to the Williamsburg Bridge. When that span was constructed in the first years of the century, a new St. Rose was built a block to the south of the old. It was a simple church, and its exterior was made of light brown stone. Several marble steps led to three doors on Broome Street (the steps from which Bridget noticed Joseph with his team in their muddy uniforms months earlier). The middle door was by far the largest. Above it was a semicircle and above that a very large circular window populated by an intricate series of stained glass through which the sun was delivered into the church itself. St. Rose's had a single steeple, a somewhat stubby affair to the east with a square top and a cupola for its bell. That top was encased in copper that was beginning to go green in spots and its smaller tower was capped by a crucifix.

The rectory was one street to the north. It faced the entrance to the bridge. When Bridget and Joseph and Bridget's parents arrived a little after nine on the Saturday after Joseph got the letter from the War Department, they entered. They had, all but Mrs. Campbell, gotten dispensation from their employers to take the day off.

The parish had a grammar school, but it was on the other side of a playground to the east of the rectory. The East River itself and the fields where Joseph played were past that.

The rectory was a plain building, with a light-brown brick facing that matched the church's. Its front doors were dark brown, though not mahogany dark. On each of the two were windows, each in the shape of a cross, and several marble steps led to them.

The four had been there only three or four weeks earlier, when they sat with Father Murphy arranging for the wedding. They hoped for a day in August, but there were no places available, and they were fortunate to find one in September.

When they entered the rectory foyer, it was empty. The room was stuffy and quite dark, lit by a small chandelier dangling from the

ceiling, which was barely enough given the dark paneled walls. There were windows on either side of the door, but they faced north and did not help much in lighting the room.

A staircase rose from the left of the foyer and on the right side an open door led to a hallway. Between them were printed portraits of Pope Benedict and Cardinal Farley. The hallway was yellow and lit by two lights spaced along it.

To the immediate right in the room was an unoccupied desk. A yellow papal flag was on one side and an American flag on the other. On the desktop was a bell. While Bridget and her mother sat in the large wooden chairs with intricate carved backs and seats covered in red leather, Mr. Campbell lifted the bell from the desk and rang it while Joseph looked out on the street.

Soon they heard a "coming, coming" from the hall and Sister Stephen appeared.

She recognized them. When Mr. Campbell asked that they be allowed to speak to Father Murphy, she said he had a ten o'clock funeral—"the Riordan child, very sad, did you know 'em?"—but as it was just past nine he should be able to spare them some time.

Sister Stephen led the four down the hallway. It opened out to a large room. It was as fine a one as the visitors ever saw. On the far wall was a large window that opened out to the small yard between the church and the rectory and had a view of the former's apse. Another window was to the right, looking at the building to the west.

In the entry was an area bound by a leather couch and three fine leather armchairs with a large mahogany coffee table in the middle, and it was here that the four were directed. Mr. Campbell sat on the side of the couch and the others each took one of the chairs. From where they sat, they could see across to a dining room, with a large table lined with high-backed wooden chairs of the sort they saw in the foyer.

The room itself was far brighter than the foyer, painted in a calming mustard yellow. Again, there were portraits of the Pope and the Cardinal, but this time they were paintings and they hung on either side of a mantel that was opposite the window that looked across to the church. There was another landscape above the

mantelpiece, of New York City, looking down from Brooklyn and across the Brooklyn Bridge towards the Statue of Liberty.

While the visitors were still taking in the room, a priest entered. Father Murphy was a small man and looked to be all of fifteen, but he was twice that. He'd come to the parish only recently and there was talk that he might be on the run from the Brits for something or other he'd done in 1916 but no one really believed that.

His hair was neatly trimmed, and he was in a long cassock. His shoes were very shiny and had elevated heels. Even with them, he was still barely taller than Bridget.

The four turned to him and stood. He carried a large book under his arm.

"I am in a bit of a hurry with a funeral and all but Sister Stephen says you have a bit of bother you need help with."

"That's it, Father," said Mr. Campbell. "It is about my daughter here getting married to Mr. Garland here."

The priest glanced at the couple, who were holding hands, although not as discreetly as they thought, and nodded.

"You've gotten your orders have you then, Joseph?"

"That's it, Father. On June 15."

"You are not the first. I've had to reschedule three or four already and I expect a few more will be coming in."

He bade them sit again, and they uncomfortably did. He sat next to Mr. Campbell on the couch, opposite the couple. He placed the book on the table and leaned down to study it. It was St. Rose's master calendar, and the others could see page after page of notations in various colored inks.

"I am afraid," Father Murphy began, "That it...will have to be *on* the fifteenth."

The others, fearing their cause was lost completely, breathed again.

"Now, when were you scheduled?"

They gave him the date, and he turned to it.

"Yes. There it 'tis." He looked up.

"Are you sure about this, the fifteenth?"

The couple answered as one that they were and now were not afraid their mutually clenched hands would be seen by her parents.

"It shall be done," the priest pronounced. He took a pen. September 14 was only lightly schedule as yet, but the couple watched as with a stroke their wedding was removed from the chronicles of the Church.

He then turned back to June 15. The page was empty.

"Ten o'clock then. Yeah?"

They nodded to his glance, and he bent down again, writing "Wedding of Joseph Garland and Bridget Dermody"—Dermody being her father's surname—on the ten o'clock line. He left the book open so the ink could dry and the two stared at the new reality of it. The priest turned the book so they could see that it was there and it was real and that in just over two weeks they'd be husband and wife.

The good father agreed that under the circumstances there need not be three banns. He met with the couple several times and believed them to be compatible and excited about becoming husband and wife. When he finished making the new entry in the calendar, he asked whether they expected many to attend the ceremony. "Well, you know father, I've no family but we expect a fair number from the parish and St. Mary's and some from my work and, of course, Bridget has boatloads of friends. But a change of date shouldn't be a problem."

"Then I think It'd be fine to move it," said the priest, and with that he rose and shook everyone's hands and apologized for having to prepare for the Riordan funeral.

The four stood when the priest did. Sister Stephen had been standing off to the side throughout and stepped forward to say how pleased she was and led them back down the hall through the dark foyer and to the street.

As they were about to leave, Bridget turned. "Is there anything more you need from us?"

"You best come back in the days beforehand to meet again with Father Murphy, and he can tell you. Otherwise, we will be waiting her for you on the fifteenth."

It was not yet ten, and Mr. Campbell decided to splurge a bit on the couple. There was a café several blocks to the south, though they rarely went there, but this morning they did, Mr. Campbell's treat.

Once the date for the wedding was altered, Joseph and Bridget spent as much time together as they could. He became a fixture at the Campbells' for dinner, and Mrs. Campbell never tired of trying to put some fat on his bones. A full Joseph and a content Bridget would stroll nearly every night except when it rained, which it did a few times, and he spent those evenings in their living room.

Apart from that, word quickly spread about his having to report for duty, as it did for others who received their letter from the War Department, and they both were the frequent recipients of both congratulations and concerns, the latter always couched in the most optimistic of terms.

On the Monday after meeting with Father Murphy, Mrs. Campbell headed down to Orchard Street. Mrs. Sullivan told her when she walked in, "The dress will be ready, the dress will be ready" but was cut off when she was told it had to be ready sooner. Much, much sooner.

"How soon?" a surprised Mrs. Sullivan asked.

"They're doing it on June 15."

"Two weeks?"

"Aye. Can you do it?"

Mrs. Sullivan understood what happened. Word of the call-ups was spreading and tensions were ratcheting up. She didn't expect it to happen with Bridget since she and her fiancé were on the old side, but it had.

It was a simple dress.

"Mrs. Campbell, don't you worry. Don't allow poor Bridget to worry. It'll be ready. I'll have it for her when she comes by in one week. I shouldn't think there will be many alterations required. No. It'll be ready, and it'll be beautiful and she'll be more beautiful than any of us could have imagined."

The dress was plain. It was appropriately and traditionally blue. Bridget would rent a pair of matching shoes from a bootmaker who

had a lucrative sideline renting blue shoes to the girls and women getting married.

Around her neck she'd wear a broach, a family heirloom from the Campbell side that Mrs. Campbell had herself worn when she married Bridget's stepfather.

His Best Suit

Joseph had few such difficulties. He was to wear his best suit. It was only two years old, and he saved it to be worn for special occasions. It was the dark blue one he wore when he went to mass in hopes of attracting Bridget Campbell's attention. He had other suits that were somewhat frayed from frequent use, but this was far and away his best. Other clerks chipped in and on the Thursday after the date change, they took Joseph to a haberdasher on Broadway during their lunch period, and he was fitted with a fine white shirt with buttoned cuffs and a snap-in collar plus a blue tie.

Colleagues

On the Saturday one week before the wedding, many of Joseph's colleagues from work took the trolley with him at noon when work ended, and they went to O'Connell's. Mr. O'Connell himself—Dennis was his Christian name, but no one used it—rushed to Joseph and the others as they entered a bit before one.

"'Tis all set up for you, lads. I'll take you there. A few be upstairs already."

Though he was born in New York, through no small effort he spoke like one who'd entered the world by the side of the River Shannon.

When they reached the second floor, five or six of Joseph's friends from St. Rose mingled about with Mr. Campbell and John Campbell. The group wiled the afternoon away with pints of Mr. O'Connell's best German ale and Irish American corned beef and cabbage. It was a delicacy Joseph never took a fancy to, and he was glad he only had to eat it on St. Patrick's Day. Aye, but as it was tradition, he cleaned his plate and washed it down with a bit more ale than he normally would have on a Saturday afternoon in June.

It was, he was reminded a score of times, his last Saturday as a bachelor, and the thought merely made him more excited about his first Saturday as a married man.

Joseph had far more ale than he was used to and was never certain whether he embarrassed himself before Mr. Campbell and John but at some point several of his mates accompanied him to his boarding house and got him to his room and got him in bed. And when Mr. Campbell and John got home, they said they had nothing to say about Joseph and the event at O'Connell's beyond, "I doubt whether Joseph will be coming by tonight," which is what a not completely sober Mr. Campbell said with John pulling his sister aside to assure her that Joseph was fine, just a wee bit "to the wind."

June 9, 1918

Though he did not feel completely himself when he got up on Sunday morning, Joseph was careful and tried to look his best for the ten o'clock mass. He got there early and after confirming that the Campbells were not inside, he stood off to the side of St. Rose's steps and waited, anxiously looking at his watch and accepting yet another mountain of congratulations.

Finally, at about nine-fifty, he saw the full pack of Campbells—Mr. Campbell and Bridget's older brother John included—approaching and half jumped to the sidewalk to meet them. Bridget, who was to her mother's right, stuck her hand out, and he took it and after a nod to Campbell *père* he turned as they entered the church and genuflected into their regular pew.

They long sat next to one another at mass, and this was no different, and the pair followed the ritual as they always did and paid scant attention to the sermon as they always did. When they got to the street with Bridget's family, she asked her mother whether it was alright for her to spend the afternoon with Joseph. They'd get something to eat, she said, and her mother gathered her flock and headed to their flat while Joseph and Bridget watched them leave.

They walked west so they could catch a trolley to Central Park. It was a delightful late spring day. They walked first along the Park's Mall but then continued north, going along the west side of the Lake where they hadn't ventured before. They found a cluster of benches between the Park Drive and the bridle path. The couple was quite warm and tired, and they were happy to find an unoccupied one.

An Italian vendor was nearby with his cart, and Joseph bought sandwiches as well as two bottles of ale. Bridget pulled a handkerchief from her bag and after she used it to brush the slates she spread it between them on the bench, and he placed the sandwiches in the middle with the ale on either side.

It was peculiar. They each regretted taking bites as with each one more and more of their feast was gone. It could not be helped, though, and too soon their simple meal was over. He gathered up the

papers and carried them to a can set perhaps twenty feet away and he brought the empty bottles back to the Italian, who would get them cleaned and refilled.

As Joseph returned, Bridget began to rise, but he put up his hand and she sat back down.

In all the excitement of the past months and especially the past weeks, they'd not often spoken about what was happening and what might happen. They were slightly apart on the bench, and they turned so they faced each other, and their hands joined.

"I am sure I'll be safe," he told her in as artificially confident a voice as he could muster. "I am well too old and if they even give me a gun it will only be for show. And now that we're there, Americans actually fighting, *really there* with a significant number of troops, I am sure it will not be too long before the Kaiser is done for, and the war is won. With luck it will be over before they even think of sending an old clerk like me to the shooting. So you mustn't worry, my dear."

Bridget remained silent. Part of her wanted to believe what her lover was telling her. A very large part of her. In fact, what Joseph said did make quite a lot of sense. Yet, from the horrors she read about, even more since he got his letter, she believed that were *he* to be given a gun and be sent to the front lines, he'd never come back to her. She was sure of it. She knew this was not rational. Most of them surely would return. But she *knew* in every one of her bones that Joseph would not.

Still, she plastered a smile on herself. She so wanted to pull him to her with her hands. To have his mouth crash into hers, damn the people who could see. To kiss and be kissed.

She could not surrender to this need and desire. She *would be* strong. It was less than a week before he left and who knows how long before he was sent abroad. How long she'd have to even see him as his wife before he boarded a ship to Europe. He was not the most coordinated of people. Lord knew that was the truth. He'd probably flunk out well before they gave him a rifle and he'd probably be posted to some boring spot where he'd move papers from one pile to another and never hear the slightest ripple of a gun fired in anger.

She told herself this as she had told herself this from the moment she saw the War Department letter. It was all that prevented her from surrendering herself to herself. When suddenly, there on that bench, she found her body being pulled to his. He shifted his rear so it closed the gap between them, and his lips were on hers. It'd have to do, they knew, for a very long time, this moment of passion and intimacy, however slight. Sitting on a bench in Central Park amid unknown couples who cared nothing for anything beyond themselves, quite like Bridget Dermody and Joseph Garland.

Soon their kiss became deeper and more passionate, and they both felt things they never knew before. They'd kissed before, many times, but never like this, never with this immediacy and longing. It'd have to be enough and that is what made it *not* enough. But they were beyond thinking of that or of the War or of his having to report for duty in six days.

Neither knew for how long it lasted though both knew it was not long enough. One pushed the other away—they did not know who though they both understood it had to be—and Bridget was about to rub the back of her hand against her lips to clean them. She realized just in time that it'd clean him from her too and she resisted, not even using her handkerchief. She would taste him for as long as she could.

Joseph did not know what got into him. Well, he did know. But he hadn't expected it, and he was glad he let it happen. As if he had any choice. The feeling of her would have to do but that was enough. She was so extraordinary that this slight connection was more than he believed himself entitled to.

They were quiet as they walked to the east. They passed the Metropolitan Museum on Fifth Avenue. They hadn't been there, but promised they'd visit *when* he came back.

In fact, very little was said as they headed back to the neighborhood. It was late, approaching six, and they both hoped that Mrs. Campbell was not waiting for them to return for supper. They continued east for several blocks where they found an omnibus to take them south.

The bus was crowded, but they did not mind being forced to hold a pole towards the rear, and she used the pretext of being afraid to

fall to hold on to him as tightly as she could until she was against him and his free hand was wrapped around her waist in a way that was publicly appropriate only on an omnibus or a trolley or a subway and if the conductor asked when they were getting off they both would have told him “never” but he did not ask and they reached Delancey Street and they wiggled their way to the door and jumped out to the street and slowly walked to her building.

Mrs. Campbell hadn’t held supper for them, and when they arrived at the apartment the family was nearly done. Bridget’s mother jumped up as they came through the door. She maneuvered past the others and found and brought them plates. Florence and Harold protested that Bridget and Joseph did not deserve a meal since they were so late, but Mr. Campbell told them that “once in a while we must make exceptions, and this is one of those times.” Which quieted the children.

Nothing was said about Bridget and Joseph beyond her saying they had a pleasant afternoon in Central Park and neither noticed that both of her parents smiled at the memory of some other pleasant walks they took in Central Park at some time in the now distant past.

Walking

Bridget and Joseph saw each other as often as they could during the week. It was nearing the beginning of summer, and it stayed light well into the evening. Except for the Wednesday, when the rain was heavy, the two walked in the neighborhood, now and then receiving the good luck wishes of people they knew for years and years and more than a few of the older women insisted on offering a blessing for them, in Gaelic as often as not, though neither Joseph nor Bridget knew quite what those blessings meant.

June 15, 1918

June 15, 1918, dawned a bit chilly and a fog rolled in overnight. It'd be warm and by eight the fog would be burnt off.

Joseph awoke. His dark blue suit was on a hanger in his wardrobe next to the fine white shirt and blue tie his mates bought for him at that haberdasher on Broadway. His shoes, black and freshly polished, were in the corner with the socks already in place. He carried a towel down the hall to the communal bathroom and after a shower shaved himself as closely as he dared. Back in his room, he looked between the suit hanging up and the duffel bag in which he placed the necessities he'd be bringing to the armory after the ceremony.

There'd only be time for a short, congratulatory toast, and Father Murphy agreed that it could be done in the large room in the Rectory where he had met with them. It was very rarely done and few of the parishioners were ever in the room before, but all agreed that circumstances made it an appropriate gesture.

The mass began at the stroke of ten, said by Father Murphy with two local lads serving as altar boys. Joseph's firm provided him a very fine ring at cost for his bride, but it took longer to slip it on her finger with both of their hands moving jerkily.

But on went the ring after the vows were exchanged. And Joseph was able to kiss his wife and it was different than the one they shared not so long before in Central Park but perhaps even more intimate; and again neither did anything to remove the other's taste as they turned and walked up the aisle to the cheers of the guests.

Afterward

I know very little about what happened to Joseph P. Garland (my grandfather) after this. No one who knew him is alive. He died in 1942, and I came along in 1956. Bridget, my grandmother, lived in a tiny apartment on Clark Street in Brooklyn Heights—my parents lived in an apartment on a lower floor of the building right after they were married in 1948—for many years, and she kept it after she moved into our house in Tuckahoe, New York. I knew her, but she died in 1970 and I did not know her well. She was a small woman with white hair. My sister Patty, who is six years older than me, recalls that she loved hats.

We have no pictures of my grandfather. What I can piece together is as follows.

He was orphaned before he was ten. He appears in the 1900 Census as an "inmate" in a Catholic Asylum on Madison Avenue, which was the name given to an orphanage. (I wrote about the Foundling Asylum in my novel *Róisín Campbell*, which is set a bit earlier, in the 1870s.)

Information about where he and Bridget lived comes from his draft-registration card and Census records. Joseph was baptized in 1888 at St. Brigid's Church, known as the Famine Church, on Avenue B and East Eighth Street Speaking of churches, St. Rose of Lima no longer exists. To give you an idea of the Irish population, it was only a few blocks from St. Mary's (where Bridget was baptized in September 1888, and which still exists and maintains St. Rose's parish records). The original St. Rose was torn down to make way for the Manhattan entrance to the Williamsburg Bridge, which opened in 1903. I have no pictures of the St. Rose when it was rebuilt. (The description I used for its exterior is from St. Joseph's Church in Yorkville, Manhattan, where the funeral mass for my aunt Louise (on my mother's side of the family) was held in 2019.)

Bridget, too, lost her father young. She had an older brother, John. Her mother remarried though I have not found that marriage record beyond the date from New York City records.

The 1900 and 1910 Censuses had a question for women: Children born/Children alive. For Mary (or Maria) Dermody (later Campbell), it was 9 and 6 in 1900 and 12 and 7 in 1910, which meant a daughter named Sadie who was born in 1897 died during the decade. Things were difficult, and Mary's parents emigrated from somewhere in Ireland but moved outside Chicago before coming to New York. I do not know why she and her husband (my great grandparents) made the trip back east. It is a mystery of the sort you find in genealogical research.

Joseph did not get to Europe in the War. Americans only got there in mid-1918 and he was discharged in January 1919. He'd been stationed in Albany, New York. At some point, he suffered in a serious infection from dental surgery and was largely disabled, though I do not know when that was. My father was born in 1922. According to the 1930 Census, he and his parents (Bridget and Joseph) lived on Vernon Avenue in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn. He was their only child.

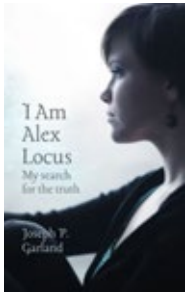
The Author

Joseph P. Garland has written numerous stories and several novels. This is his third venture into the world of Jane Austen. He has published three novels set in the early years of the Gilded Age in New York and a contemporary novel set chiefly in New York. He is a New York lawyer.

His books can be found at:
https://dermodyhouse.com/books/

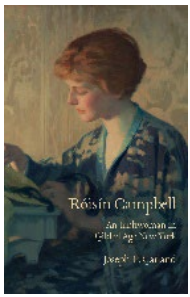
As Joseph P. Garland (Literary Fiction)

Contemporary

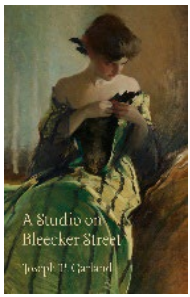


I Am Alex Locus: My Search for the Truth
(set chiefly on the
Upper West Side and in Bronxville, NY)

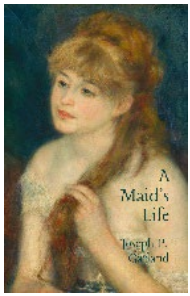
Gilded Age



Róisín Campbell: An Irishwoman in New York
(available on KU)

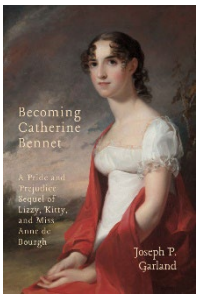


A Studio on Bleecker Street
(available on KU)



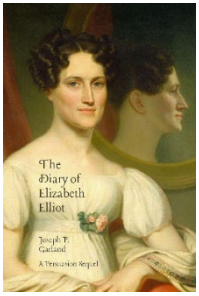
A Maid's Life

Jane Austen Fan Fiction



Becoming Catherine Bennet

The Omen at Rosings Park: How Elizabeth Became Mrs. Darcy,



The Diary of Elizabeth Elliot

As J.P. Garland (Romances)

Coming to Terms

Disowned

A Theory About Valentine's Day

A Vintage Gown* (*and the women who own it)

An American Historian on Oxford's High Street

A Fairytale of New York

Accidently in Love

The Prodigal Daughter

An International Exchange

DermodyHouse.com