



Bio & Character Sketch of

Lawyer for
Barkwell

George Starrett

December 15, 1884 - December 28, 1958

Age in April, 1923: 38 Age at Death: 74

Age when picture was taken: (est) 38

George Starrett was born December 15, 1884 in Buchanan County, Missouri to Thomas Gallatin Starrett and Margaret Davis Starrett.

He graduated from the University of Missouri Law School in 1909 and soon became Columbia's City Attorney before serving two terms as the Boone County Prosecutor. He was the county prosecutor immediately before Ruby Hulen was elected to the role. Later, Starrett served as the County Probate Judge, also for two terms.

Starrett was active in the Democratic Party as well as several social organizations including the Masons and the Elks. He was the Grand Site of the Sovereign Grand Lodge of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows.

Starrett was an outgoing, extrovert who often made speeches to civic groups throughout the county. He was self-deprecating and would never miss an opportunity to make people feel good. Not everyone liked Starrett, but all would agree that he had the reputation for being a likable guy.

Starrett was twice married and twice widowed. He first married Anna Brady in 1935 at the age of fifty-one. After she died, he married Ellen Arnold in 1942. Arnold died just a few months before Starrett.

On December 28, 1958 at then age of seventy-four, George Starrett died at home from a heart attack.



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Character Sketch

George Starrett may not have liked George Barkwell – their personalities likely clashed – but Starrett knew that Barkwell’s trial would be a big one and he likely jumped at the opportunity to use his skills to defend his client.

Based on his marrying at such a late age (55) and his outgoing personality, it’s easy to see George Starrett as a handsome, professional, wealthy bachelor who liked the ladies. An accomplished ham-actor, Starrett played in charity baseball games, made patriotic speeches to all types of groups and probably had some time available for socializing. (He was obviously a snappy dresser as well.) The combination of his good looks, smart lawyer skills and wealth as a result of his single life must have been intoxicating to many of the single women in Boone County.

As a former Prosecutor for Boone County – and Ruby Hulen’s direct predecessor – Starrett was singularly fitted for the role of defense attorney. While he did not have the prestige of his fellow defense team members, a state senator and a US congressman, Starrett did know the inner workings of the Boone County Prosecutor’s Office. He likely still had contacts that he could lean on.

Based on his cleverly written closing argument, Starrett felt that the Prosecution, namely Ruby Hulen, had backed himself into a corner well before the lynching even took place. He showed the jury that even Ruby Hulen felt the man that Barkwell murdered deserved what was coming to him because Hulen indicted him.

And Starrett’s coup de gras to the prosecution was yet to come. He closed his argument by bringing all the national media attention about the lynching to his service. By invoking the biblical story of casting the first stone, Starrett recognized that many members of the jury probably felt guilty (if not responsible) for the lynching – at least in the media’s eyes - so why would they throw stones and convict someone else who was perhaps only slightly more guilty than they were?