

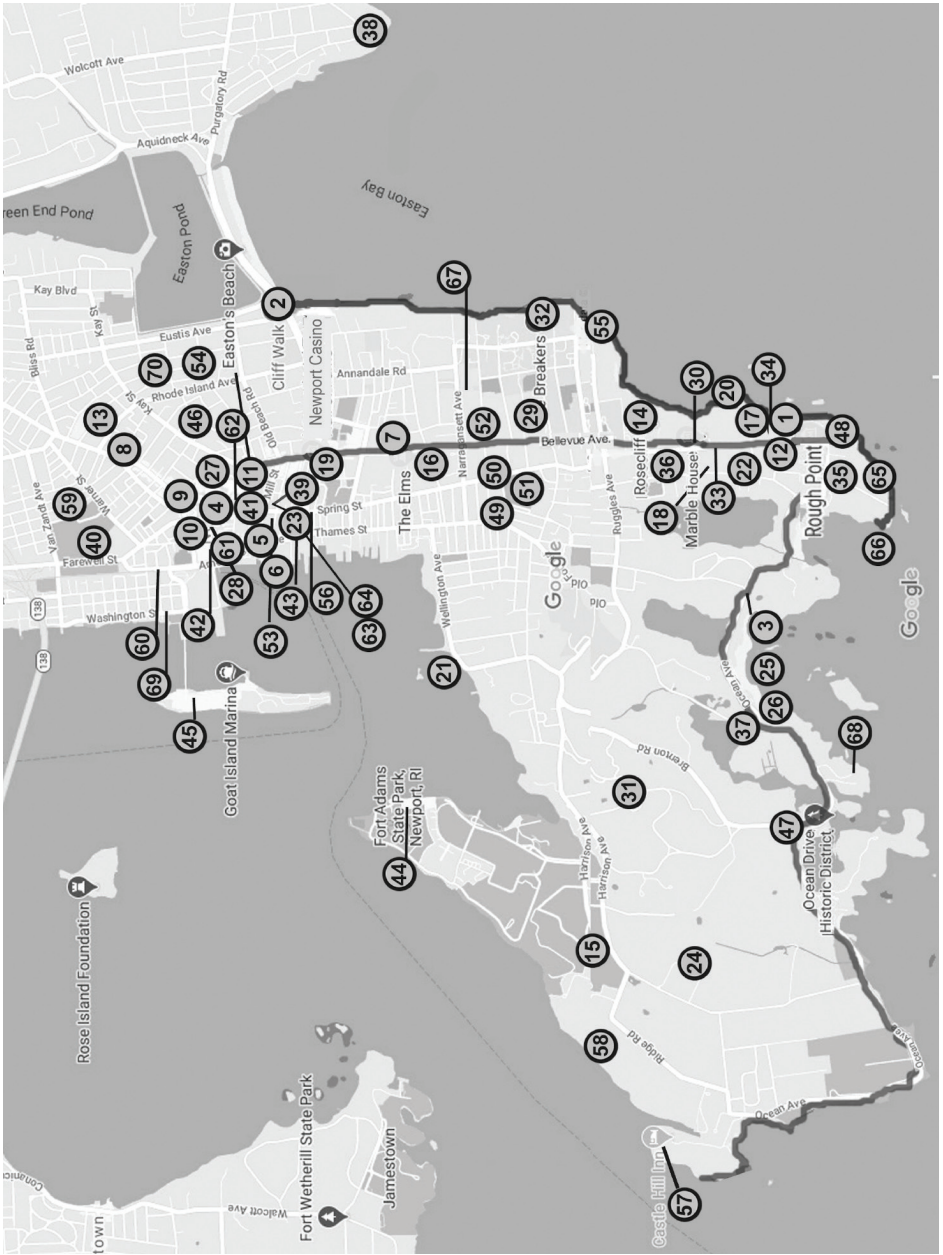
# **HOMICIDE AT ROUGH POINT**

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TENACITY MEDIA BOOKS

Mario Puzo famously began *The Godfather* with Balzac's observation that "Behind every great fortune there is a crime." Few concentrations of American wealth are associated with as many crimes as the tobacco, aluminum and energy fortune inherited by Doris Duke. This is the full, unexpurgated story of one of them.



## Newport Map: Locations cited in Homicide At Rough Point.

- 1      **Rough Point:** 680 Bellevue Avenue
- 2      **Cliff Walk:** Memorial Boulevard to Ledge Road
- 3      **Ocean Drive:** Ocean Avenue to Castle Hill
- 4      **Touro Synagogue:** 85 Touro Street
- 5      **Newport Daily News:** 140 Thames Street (1967-1968)
- 6      **The Black Pearl:** 10 ½ Bannister's Wharf
- 7      **De La Salle Academy:** 364 Bellevue Avenue
- 8      **Cranston-Calvert School:** 15 Cranston Avenue
- 9      **The Quality Lunch:** 25 Broadway
- 10     **Newport Police Headquarters (1967-68)**
- 11     **Newport Reading Room:** 29 Bellevue Avenue
- 12     **Quatrel/Lorillard Estate:** 673 Bellevue Avenue
- 13     **Newport Hospital:** 20 Powell Avenue
- 14     **Rosecliff:** 548 Bellevue Avenue
- 15     **Hammersmith Farm:** 225 Harrison Avenue
- 16     **The Elms/Berwind Estate:** 367 Bellevue Avenue
- 17     **Miramar/Rice Estate:** 646 Bellevue Avenue
- 18     **The Holmwoods:** 161 Coggeshall Avenue
- 19     **Newport Casino:** 190 Bellevue Avenue
- 20     **Clarendon Court:** 626 Bellevue Avenue
- 21     **Ida Lewis Yacht Club:** 170 Wellington Avenue
- 22     **Belcourt/Tinney Estate:** 657 Bellevue Avenue
- 23     **Touro Park:** Bellevue Avenue & Mill Street
- 24     **Newport Country Club:** 280 Harrison Avenue
- 25     **Baileys Beach:** 34 Ocean Avenue
- 26     **The Ledges/Cushing Estate:** 66 Ocean Avenue
- 27     **Tubley's Spa:** 58 Spring Street (1967)
- 28     **Superior Courthouse:** 45 Washington Square
- 29     **Chateau-Sur-Mer:** 474 Bellevue Avenue
- 30     **Marble House:** 596 Bellevue Avenue
- 31     **Beacon Hill/Swiss Village:** 152 Harrison Avenue
- 32     **The Breakers:** 44 Ochre Point Avenue
- 33     **Beaulieu:** 615 Bellevue Avenue

- 34 **Rock Cliff:** 670 Bellevue Avenue
- 35 **The Mailands:** 37 Ledge Road
- 36 **Sherwood:** 533 Bellevue Avenue
- 37 **Idle Hour:** Ocean Avenue & Hazard Road
- 38 **The Clambake Club:** 353 Tuckerman Avenue
- 39 **The Newport Tower:** 152 Mill Street
- 40 **Newport's Back Yard:** 93 Kingston Avenue
- 41 **The Hotel Viking:** 1 Bellevue Avenue
- 42 **Fire Department Headquarters:** 21 West Marlborough
- 43 **The Blue Cat:** 38 ½ Franklin Street
- 44 **Fort Adams:** 90 Fort Adams Drive
- 45 **The Torpedo Station:** Goat Island (1939-51)
- 46 **Daniel Swinburne:** 6 Greenough Place
- 47 **The Playhouse:** 294 Ocean Avenue
- 48 **Seaverge:** 4 Ledge Road
- 49 **The Hedges / van Rensselaer Estate:** 453 Bellevue Avenue
- 50 **Timmy & Julia Sullivan's House**
- 51 **Brown Villa/Slocum Estate:** 459 Bellevue Avenue
- 52 **St. Catherine Academy:** 424 Bellevue Avenue
- 53 **Pelham Garage:** 17 Pelham Street
- 54 **Whitehall/Coogan Estate:** Catherine Street
- 55 **Fairholme/Young Estate:** 237 Ruggles Avenue
- 56 **St. Mary's Church:** 12 William Street
- 57 **Castle Hill Inn:** 590 Ocean Avenue
- 58 **Annandale Farm:** 25 Ridge Road
- 59 **Daniel Lyman House:** 28 Kingston Avenue
- 60 **Daniel Lyman House:** 11 Third Street
- 61 **YMCA:** 41 Mary Street
- 62 **Trinity Church:** 1 Queen Anne Square
- 63 **Rev. Lockett F. Ballard:** 44 Pelham Street
- 64 **Dr. McAllister's office:** 92 Pelham Street
- 65 **Plaisance/Beck Estate:** 41 Ledge Road
- 66 **Pelican Lodge/Pell Residence:** 61 Ledge Road
- 67 **Bois Doré:** 115 Narragansett Avenue
- 68 **Seafair:** 254 Ocean Avenue
- 69 **Hunter House:** 54 Washington Street
- 70 **Eastbourne Lodge:** 78 Rhode Island Avenue

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# INTRODUCTION

Cielo Drive cuts like a beautiful scar along the bottom of a V-shaped canyon in the hills of Bel Air, off of Benedict. In the winter, when the rains come, it's lush and green and that's the way Sharon Tate saw it from 10050 Cielo, the red farmhouse she'd rented with her husband Roman Polanski. As she unpacked the moving boxes on Valentine's Day in 1969, she had no way of knowing that she only had another six months to live.

On the night of August 9<sup>th</sup>, four hyper-violent members of "The Manson Family" would invade that red house and murder Sharon, along with three of her closest friends. But strangely, half a year earlier, Sharon had a short brush with a *different* killer.

It happened in late February after her younger sister Patti, looked across the canyon at the ominous Spanish-Moorish estate Sharon called "The Haunted House." In their remarkable memoir, *Restless Souls*,<sup>1</sup> Alisa Statmen and Brie Tate wrote that Patti, then eleven years old and curious for a look at the place, hiked down the cul-de-sac and across Cielo Drive. She walked up Bella Drive to number 1436. There she encountered an open gate where two white pillars topped with carriage lamps bore the name of the estate: Falcon Lair.



In 1925 it had been purchased by Rodolfo Alonso Raffaello Pierre Filbert Guglielmi di Valentina d'Antonguolla, otherwise known as Rudolf Valentino.<sup>2</sup> Worshiped by silent film fans as “the great lover,” Rudy, as friends knew him, once observed that, “I am merely the canvas on which women paint their dreams.” Still, at that time he was Hollywood’s reigning king and the 16-room villa that sprawled across eight acres equipped with stables, kennels and servants’ quarters, sat atop the hill like a white stucco castle.

In 1953, that estate was bought by Doris Duke, the fabulously wealthy heiress to a fortune amassed by her father from the profits of American Tobacco Company, Alcoa Aluminum, and Duke Power. She was the reigning female scion of the family that endowed Duke University.

## TEA & COOKIES

The big black wrought iron gates were open when young Patti wandered inside that day. Suddenly, she heard the caretaker yell out in a loud British accent, “This is private property. What are you *doing* here?” Startled, Patti turned and lost her balance in the gravel driveway, falling and skinning her knee. Just then, as if on cue, a black limousine pulled in. A tinted window rolled down and a tall woman in back lowered her sunglasses and asked who she was.

Once Patti identified herself as the sister of “Sharon,” who lived “across the way in the red barn,” Doris Duke knew that this wasn’t just *any* eleven year old. She was the sister of the hottest young star in Hollywood who was married to one of the hottest young directors. So, in her imperial style, Doris snapped to the caretaker, “Stop being such an *ogre* and bring Patti in so we can clean those scrapes. And get me the Polanskis’ phone number.”

Later, as Patti recounted in the book, the Duke staff had bandaged her knee and served her tea and cookies when Sharon walked in, “nervously chewing her lower lip” and apologizing to the blond billionaire who, at that moment, was the third richest woman in the world behind Queen Elizabeth II & Queen Juliana of The Netherlands.<sup>3</sup> But Sharon Tate, whose motion picture career was taking off like an Atlas rocket,

was royalty herself. Her husband Roman, just coming off the hit film *Rosemary's Baby*, was a kind of cinematic Polish prince. So why was she nervous? What would make her bite her lip in the face of a woman whose caretaker's aggressive warning had caused her little sister to draw blood?

Because Sharon was killed so mercilessly that summer, we'll never know. But one thing is sure. That wasn't the *first* time Sharon Tate had been drawn into Doris Duke's orbit. Nearly two and a half years earlier, one of Sharon's closest friends, designer Eduardo Tirella, had been violently killed after Miss Duke crushed him under a two-ton station wagon and many of his friends suspected that it was murder.

There have been dozens of books chronicling what infamously became known as the "Tate-LaBianca murders;"<sup>4</sup> from Vincent Bugliosi's groundbreaking *Helter Skelter* to Ed Sanders' terrifying Manson bio, *The Family*. The brutal stabbing of Sharon Tate, then eight and a half months pregnant with her son Paul, is a tragic cautionary tale of a young woman of great promise cut down in the prime of life. But the same can be said for Eduardo, whose career as a Hollywood set designer was just beginning to catch fire, when he told the possessive, often violent heiress that he was leaving her, just minutes before she ran him down outside the gates of her Newport, Rhode Island estate. Because Doris Duke had the money and the power, she succeeded in effectively erasing his death from the narrative of her controversial life. For more than fifty years, the full truth behind what happened at Rough Point on the late afternoon of October 7<sup>th</sup>, 1966 has been hidden.

Until now.

# PREFACE

I grew up in Newport, Rhode Island, where I learned to write my first five-point lead. After college I went away and came back 50 years later to try and crack a homicide case. It had sat unsolved, like a stone in my shoe, ever since I'd left town. In the beginning, I thought that there were two principal characters in the story: the billionaire and her victim, but I soon came to realize that there was a third protagonist: Newport itself.

Two legendary men of American letters, the social critic Cleveland Amory and the novelist/playwright Thornton Wilder, who twice won the Pulitzer Prize, each saw the former Rhode Island colonial capital as a series of cities. In his 1953 study of the country's great playgrounds for the rich, *The Last Resorts*,<sup>5</sup> Amory described "three separate Newports." But Wilder was far more discerning. Twenty years later, in his novel *Theophilus North* he understood Newport in the context of German archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann, who had discovered ancient Troy as "nine cities, one on top of the other."<sup>6</sup>

That took me back to my first trip to Rome where one can find evidence of multiple eras within a few city blocks. From the balcony above the Piazza Venezia, where Il Duce delivered his frightening Fascist rants in the 1930's, to the Forum Boarium, site of the first gladiatorial combat in 264 BC, and not far away, The Palantine Hill where mythol-

ogy tells us that Romulus and Remus were birthed from a she-wolf 500 years before that. All I had to do was “roll focus” and I could time travel without changing hotels.

So it was and still is with Newport, a city of layers where the history of the American experiment in liberty has been manifested in all of its glory, heroism, ambition, accomplishment, treachery and grace.

This is a story about a brilliant life cut short too soon by one of the luckiest beneficiaries of unbridled capitalism who ever lived. But it’s also a tale of generations of every class and color who endeavored -- and for the most part succeeded -- in making that experiment work. I loved this town as a kid and going back now, as I sought to examine it in hindsight, I love it even more.

So let’s take a walk from the Newport waterfront, up Historic Hill past the old Stone Tower and down Bellevue Avenue to the Ocean Drive and let’s see how many layers we can find as we unravel the homicide at Rough Point.

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Newport, Rhode Island  
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