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# HOMICIDE AT ROUGH POINT

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THE UNTOLD STORY OF HOW DORIS DUKE  
THE RICHEST WOMAN IN AMERICA  
GOT AWAY WITH MURDER

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COVER UP AND 1000 YEARS FOR REVENGE

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

# “THE MIGHTY FIFTH”

To underscore the conflicts between the privileged members of the Summer Colony like Doris Duke, who lived “upstairs,” and the Newporters from “downstairs,” who served them, the legend of Timmy “The Woodhooker” Sullivan and his sister Julia must be told. Its populist roots are planted in the history of the Newport Irish, who for centuries, were the backbone of the city’s working class, living primarily in a section of town between Bellevue Avenue and the waterfront known as “The Fifth Ward.” Over the decades they prospered and eventually came to run City Hall, the police and fire departments and the courts; later giving way to immigrants from Italy and the Portuguese Azores. But it was the Irish – in particular, the Sullivan family – who made perhaps the most indelible mark on the cultural history of the local citizenry.

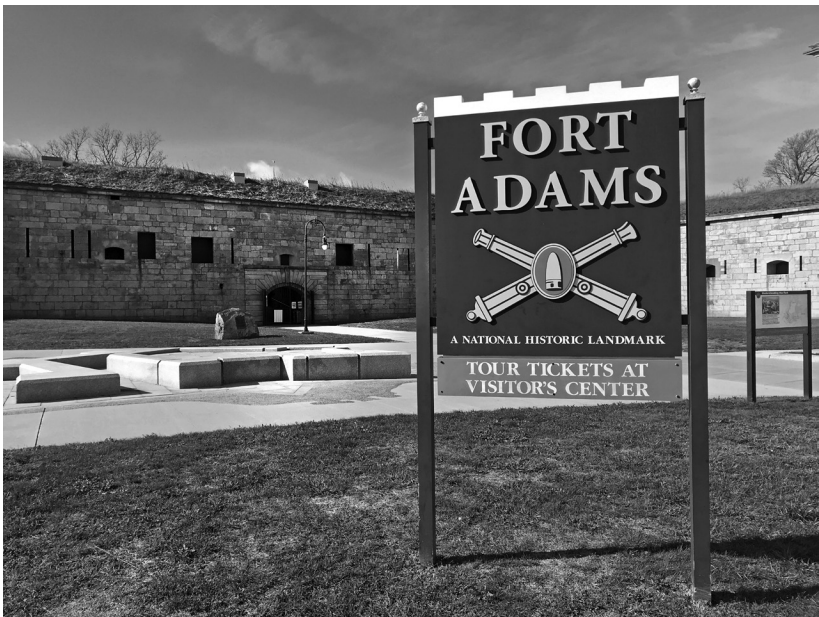
“In Newport, when it comes to the Irish – particularly in The Fifth Ward -- you can’t go two blocks without running into a relative,” said Patsy Gallagher (now Snyder) whose family stretches far and wide across The City By The Sea.<sup>499</sup> She and her cousin Pat were at St. Catherine’s and De La Salle respectively. Between them they know half the town.

The Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission found that Newport was the state’s first community to have a substantial

Irish population. “Although Irish settlers had come to Newport by the mid-eighteenth century, the first significant numbers of Irish immigrants arrived during the 1820s. (They) came to work on the construction of Fort Adams, and many settled in the Southern Thames area - the built-up portion of town closest to the construction site.”<sup>500</sup> As a measure of what those Hibernians contributed to the City, consider Fort Adams’s own history.

From 1776 to 1779, during The Revolutionary War, Newport was taken and forcefully occupied by the British. Half the town’s population fled and the once thriving economy was in ruins.<sup>501</sup> The first Fort, built to defend against another attack, was a relatively small garrison commissioned on July 4<sup>th</sup> 1799 and named for President John Adams.

After the War of 1812, when Fort McHenry in Baltimore took the brunt of the British attack, Congress appropriated the equivalent of \$1.33 million in today’s dollars, and an Irish immigrant force of 300 laborers working six days a week for seven years<sup>502</sup> built what became “the largest coastal defense... of its kind in the United States.”<sup>503</sup>



Fort Adams today, site of the annual Newport Jazz and Folk Festivals



Consisting of a central structure of irregular pentagonal design with a detached Redoubt, the massive walls of Maine granite and local shale, 900 feet long and three stories high, were initially designed to mount up to 500 pieces of artillery.<sup>504</sup> For the next century, through The Civil War and World Wars I and II, Fort Adams shielded Newport from land and sea assault. Many of the same Irish laborers who raised those walls did the stone work on St. Mary's Church, where John Fitzgerald Kennedy and Jacqueline Lee Bouvier were married in 1953.

Few cities of its size have celebrated the Feast of Saint Patrick like Newport and no ancestor of The Emerald Isle, beyond the 35<sup>th</sup> President himself, was more beloved locally in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century than Timothy Sullivan,

## **“WHICH SULLIVAN WAS HE?”**

“You couldn't throw a bottle of Guinness in this town without hitting a Sullivan,” recalled Bill Dunn, one of my oldest friends, whose grandfather's first cousin, Big Eddie Sullivan, was Chief of Police long before Joseph Radice took the job.<sup>505</sup> After more than 30 years in uniform, he took control of the Department in the early 1940's to clean up corruption.<sup>506</sup> In those days Thames Street was rife with slot machines, betting parlors and prostitution as young sailors swarmed into town during the build-up to World War II. When Big Eddie died suddenly in 1952, more than 700 mourners showed up for his funeral at my old parish, St. Joseph's Church.<sup>507</sup> Chief Sullivan's first cousin had another nickname: “Con The Bender.”

Some said it was because he'd lifted more than “a few jars” in his day. But Bill Dunn told me a story that touched me personally, since, in the 1950's, my father worked at The Naval Underwater Weapons Research and Engineering Station (NUWS) which Newporters always referred to as “The Torpedo Station.”

During World War II, more than 13,000 employees labored around the clock at that facility to build eighty per cent of torpedoes used by the Navy against Germany and Japan.<sup>508</sup> Located on Goat Island, just off downtown Newport, it was accessible only by ferry until a causeway was built in 1962. According to Bill, “Con” worked there in the Forties and this is how he got his nickname:



“Cornelius Edward Sullivan was a machinist at the Torpedo Station. Every morning he’d walk from 13 Carroll Avenue in The Fifth Ward to Government Landing on Thames Street and catch the Goat Island ferry. In the winter, decades before Climate Change, he would go down to King Park and walk across the ice of the frozen harbor to the island. When people saw him, bent over with his head into the wind, they started calling him ‘Con The Bender.’” <sup>509</sup>

Over the years there would be so many Sullivans – many of them residents of “The Mighty Fifth” --that they had to be distinguished by nicknames. “Which Sullivan was he?” was a phrase I heard almost weekly growing up.

So far in this story, we’ve met Capt. Paul Sullivan who declared “No foul play” in the Duke case and arrested Stephen Robertson. It was Superior Court Judge Arthur J. Sullivan who arraigned Magoo on the night of his surrender. Dr. Michael Sullivan, a pediatrician, brought so many Newport children into the world that a grammar school was named after him. <sup>510</sup>

In high school I had four Sullivans in my graduating class of 83. <sup>511</sup> I worked Saturday nights as a bar boy at Sully’s Public House, a nightclub just off Bellevue run by Francis John Pershing Sullivan, a beloved local saloon owner and radio host. In the mid 1990’s as I reconnected with my relatives in County Cork (where many in Newport hailed from) I discovered that my great grandmother was Johanna O’Sullivan. A compilation of more than 400 nicknames from a piece written by Cathy Callahan for *The Newport Daily News* is framed on the wall of The Irish Museum on Thames Street. <sup>512</sup> This is a sample:

Automobile Jack	Lightship Dick	Shieky Jim
Babe The Mourner	Little Tim	Silent Billy
Batty The Kid	Little Tom	Silver King
Biddy The Hen	Little Mag	Sis
Blind Eddie	Maggie The Bull	Skinny Biddy
Bridget The Snob	Marvelous Mary	Sleepy John
Bridget The Money	Mary Cup of Tea	Slippery Kate
Castle Hill Dan	Mexican Mike	Sneezy

Cod Fish Mary	Mike The Bear	Soda
Con The Bender	Moon	Soup
Dan The Bull	Neil The Nitpicker	Spider
Dan The Dog	Paddy The Kid	Stallion
Dan The Fox	Paddy The Bearer	Static
Dinny The Priest	Pat The Hang	Stoneface Jack
Dinny The Bitch	Noodles	Sweet William
Eddie The Brute	One-Arm Florrie	Texas Eddie
The Educated Sullivans	One-Arm Julia	Timmy The Ranty
Frisco Dan	Paddy The Fool	Tim The Cobbler

## VAN RENSSELAER VS. SULLIVAN

From the century between the 1820's Irish diaspora through the 1950's, no Sullivan earned more national acclaim, legal standing and sheer affection from his peers than Timmy "The Woodhooker," who lived with his sister in a ramshackle wreck of a cottage on the corner of Howe Avenue and Bellevue that looked like the worst shanty in Appalachia.

It was the particular scourge of a prominent member of the summer colony, who, in later years would have given Downton Abbey's Maggie Smith a run for her money: Mrs. Peyton J. van Rensselaer. If there was ever a living embodiment of "Rich Uncle Pennybags,"<sup>513</sup> the white mustached, top hatted, cane carrying tycoon who became the public face of the Monopoly game, it was Peyton Jaudon van Rensselaer.

He was a direct descendant of Killian van Rensselaer, the Amsterdam diamond and pearl merchant who co-founded the Dutch West India Company in 1621.<sup>514</sup> After establishing New Netherland, a colony along the Northeast coast, its third Director, Peter Minuit, acquired — some would say, "stole" -- the island of Manhattan from the Canarsie tribe of Lenape Native Americans for 60 guilders; the equivalent at the time of \$24.00.<sup>515</sup> It soon became known as New Amsterdam and eventually New York City.

Peyton had the blood and looks of an aristocrat. Tall, handsome and gallant even in old age, the celebrated American painter John Singer Sargent, was said to have noticed him at the Ritz Hotel in Paris in 1921, introduced himself and asked if he could sketch him.<sup>516</sup> But van Rensselaer might not have *been* at the Ritz at that time, had it not been for his first marriage in 1909 to Mabel Gertrude Mason, a much sought-after Back Bay Boston heiress.<sup>517</sup> By then, at the age of 47, Peyton, a free spending bachelor, was effectively broke. So he cashed in on his name as many impoverished British aristocrats did, by “selling” their titles.

He and Mabel were joined in a gala wedding at her family’s estate in Stockbridge, Mass., and on the strength of her husband’s name, she soon became a prominent hostess in New York and Newport.<sup>518</sup> The couple summered at the former Daniel Swinburne House, an English Gothic Revival style cottage a few blocks off upper Bellevue Avenue<sup>519</sup> and wintered in Italy.<sup>520</sup>

By 1925, however, Peyton had succeeded in blowing through what was left of Mabel’s fortune. Severely distressed and suffering from a “nervous disorder,” her health began to fail.<sup>521</sup> As her condition worsened, she began making daily visits to her Manhattan physician, Dr. G. Reese Satterlee, at his office at 9 East 40<sup>th</sup> Street just off Fifth Avenue.

On the morning of July 2<sup>nd</sup>, she was scheduled to have an X-ray. According to an *Associated Press* report, “When she reached the offices, Mrs. van Rensselaer walked through the reception room and into the office of Dr. Satterlee, then unoccupied. She opened the window and, still holding her parasol and handbag, jumped out. She was killed almost instantly when she struck the sidewalk six stories below. Two pedestrians passing the building narrowly escaped being struck.”<sup>522</sup>

Though Mabel had left him with what was described as “a comfortable trust,”<sup>523</sup> Peyton soon found himself unable to sustain his lifestyle, so he began to seek out another woman of means.

By 1931 he had found one in Lillian Washburn Newlin, a career businesswoman who had made a modest fortune by buying and selling real estate to the well-heeled in Newport and Palm Beach.

Among her holdings at the time was “The Playhouse,”<sup>524</sup> a small residence on the grounds of “Wildacre,” the former Ocean Drive mansion



of Albert H. Olmsted, brother of the aforementioned landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, who designed Central Park, the Boston Garden, and the campus of Stanford University, as well as the initial exterior blueprint for Rough Point.<sup>525</sup>

On April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1931 van Rensselaer and his second bride were married at St. David's Church in Radnor, Pennsylvania where Lillian's family lived. It was a small ceremony attended by 30 of her close friends. Peyton was 69 at the time. At the wedding, which rated two columns in *The New York Times*,<sup>526</sup> Miss Newlin, herself, 49, was dressed in an aquamarine gown of alençon lace. The *Times* notice ended by reporting that "Mr. van Rensselaer and his bride will leave tomorrow evening for Italy and will later go to London for the season. Upon their return to the country on August 1<sup>st</sup>, they will go to The Playhouse, their summer home in Newport."

That notice should have read, "her summer home," since she held the title.<sup>527</sup> Further, the prediction about the couple's post-honeymoon plans proved sadly optimistic.

Four months later, on August 13<sup>th</sup>, returning from Europe, Peyton was found dead in the couple's cabin on the luxury liner Homeric after it anchored off quarantine in New York Harbor. The official cause of death was described as "heart disease," although the ship's surgeon, Dr. J.B. Maguire, was quoted as saying, "there were no symptoms that he was seriously ill."<sup>528</sup>

At that point, the second Mrs. van Rensselaer asked that her husband's cousin Killian retrieve the body forthwith. A funeral was held the very next day at St. Bartholomew's Church on Park Avenue and he was promptly buried in the graveyard of Old St. David's in Radnor; apparently, without an autopsy. To quote Newport Chief of Detectives Paul Sullivan, speaking in the context of the Duke case, there was "no evidence of foul play."

At the time of his death, Peyton's estate left Lillian a mere \$200,000.<sup>529</sup> But as a consequence of her brief marriage, she was now in possession of a platinum Society name that had an immense impact on her business, and she put it to good use

This ad later appeared in *The Palm Beach Post*:

**PALM BEACH**

**MRS. VAN RENSSELAER OFFERS  
TO TRADE**  
**Palm Beach or Miami property**  
 for  
**A beautiful 120-acre suburban  
home near Chicago.**

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**A beautiful home in Tuxedo Park.**

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**A stone home in Larchmont, N. Y.,  
and many other interesting proper-  
ties.**

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**Tenant paying \$1,000 for season for  
delightful home here, will sub-let  
for \$500.**

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**Ocean frontage at Boynton Beach,  
100 ft. by 1200 ft.  
\$4,500**

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**VAN RENSSELAER REALTY, Inc.  
335 Worth Ave. Opp. Everglades Club  
Tel. 6663**

Using her marriage name to earn a living was a practice no heiress worthy of ordering a Tom Collins at Bailey's Beach would ever *think* of doing. But it didn't seem to hurt Lillian's social standing, at least not in Palm Beach. Just 10 months after she ran that ad, a lengthy notice appeared in the society pages of *The New York Times*, headlined "Palm Beach Scene Of A Large Party." It described a lavish tea for 100 given by Mrs. van Rensselaer at

Casa Rosada del Lago, her estate.<sup>530</sup> Another soir  e at that address was thrown to honor "Lord And Lady Ashburton of London."<sup>531</sup>

While many of the attendees at these events were second-tier swells by Newport standards, the van Rensselaer name brought a luster to Lillian's reputation in the social columns that mattered most: those of "The paper of record," in New York City.

When it came to The City By The Sea, Lillian also seemed to be held in good standing. She acquired two major residences. One was Seaverge, a large 19<sup>th</sup> century timber-framed estate next to Rough Point on the southern end of Bellevue Avenue.<sup>532</sup>

Built in 1852, it had been the summer residence of Elbridge T. Gerry, the grandson of Elbridge Gerry, one of the original signers of the Declaration of Independence.<sup>533</sup> As Massachusetts governor in 1812, he was the first to manipulate a political district to his advantage; a practice, called "gerrymandering," that remains the scourge of free and fair elections to this day.<sup>534</sup>

Mrs. van Rensselaer's other estate was "The Hedges," an imposing mansion a mile north on Bellevue Avenue. That second "cottage" and the decade long legal war that ensued, damaged Lillian socially and cost

her tens of thousands in legal bills.

But it was her plan to divide the first property into apartments that proved to be “a bridge too far,” and led to her banishment by “The Avenue crowd.” In each instance, the second Mrs. van Rensselaer, herself a late immigrant to Newport, had underestimated her adversaries at both ends of the social strata.



## CHAPTER TWENTY

# THE BATTLE OF THE WOODPILE

The most complete account of her first struggle was written in 1970 by Jim Edward, Managing Editor of *The Newport Daily News*, who was my mentor. Under the headline, “Timmy The Woodhooker Wouldn’t Like It, But House Finally Sold,” Jim told of how “The Sullivan saga began in 1912 when Timothy F. and Julia Sullivan lived with their parents on Sharon Court,” a short dead-end street near King Park in Newport’s Fifth Ward. <sup>535</sup>

Timmy worked as a laborer and teamster before becoming a peddler of kerosene oil and fruit, moving across Newport in a horse-drawn wagon with a sign that read, “Yes Gertrude, we have fruit.” Julia ran a small variety store around the corner from their house.

Later, after Bruen (Brown) Villa, one of the first Newport estates to be divided was sold, the Sullivans bid on one lot and got a tiny parcel of land which contained an old gardener’s cottage. Their purchase was “much to the surprise and consternation of Summer Colonists,” Jim wrote. “Bellevue was THE Avenue, which meant that townspeople were excluded as property owners, a condition in life reserved for the very rich.”

Habitues of the surrounding estates just assumed that the siblings would sell if the price was right, but with Irish pluck, the Sullivans dug in, replacing the one floor cottage in the 1920's with a two story wooden building. "Meanwhile," wrote Jim, "Timmy, who had long since given up peddling, and Julia who had closed her store, lived almost as recluses on Bellevue Avenue. Timmy foraged about Newport and Middletown for lumber and junk of all kinds, sometimes using a pushcart, other times a wheelbarrow. The materials he salvaged were stuffed into the Sullivans' house or piled all over their yard, some of it used as fuel by Julia who seemed to have a smoldering fire burning on the Howe Avenue right of way at all times. The house had no electricity, no central heating or other conveniences."<sup>536</sup>



Timmy The Woodhooker's house amid the mansions. Junk he collected in his yard.

## “SNOBBISHNESS AND SPITE”

By 1946, Mrs. van Rensselaer filed a petition with The Newport Board of Review, seeking to clean up what she described as “the trash heap” of wood, tin cans and mattresses that she passed each day when exiting her Howe Avenue estate.<sup>537</sup> Her pleadings were co-signed by 39 of her neighbors, including Mrs. Julia Berwind, the coal heiress who presided over The Elms, the nearby French Chateau, and Lord and Lady Camoys of Oxfordshire, England, whose daughter Noreen Drexel, a direct descendant of the founder of Brown University, would go on to become a pillar of Newport Society.<sup>538</sup> But despite that level of social weight on her side, Mrs. van Rensselaer lost out to Timmy, who called the petition an exercise in “snobbishness and spite.”

Soon, he and his sister became favorites in the national media coverage that ensued.

*The Associated Press* sent out a story that began this way: "During the years that most of his neighbors were amassing millions, Timmy was assembling, in his front yard, a very impressive collection of old lumber and other discarded articles."<sup>539</sup>

Citing Lillian's petition, the piece noted that she had measured the volume of articles in the Sullivan's yard at "252 feet long and 15 feet high," with "the odor not pleasant."

Lillian's hometown paper, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* called the legal fight an "imbroglio."<sup>540</sup> *The Baltimore Sun* reported that "Timothy and his sister Julia are liked personally by their neighbors"<sup>541</sup> and the lead in *The Boston Globe's* coverage seemed to be written with populist tongue-in-cheek:

#### **NEWPORT ELITE RILED OVER JUNK IN TIMMY'S BELLEVUE AVE. YARD**

Newport, RI – July 30<sup>th</sup>. It has been alleged that the society people who come here every Summer hold their noses a little higher than usual. Today it was intimated that they hold them especially high when they pass the home of Timothy Sullivan on the way to ultra-swank Bailey's Beach.

Mrs. van Rensselaer said the 'trash pile breeds rats.' It's made up of objects Timmy has obtained over the years pushing a two-wheeled cart through Newport streets collecting old lumber and other discarded articles. Timmy is confident in the outcome of a hearing on August 15<sup>th</sup>, because he's faced such petitions before.<sup>542</sup>

A Sunday supplement to *The Philadelphia Inquirer* covered what soon became known as "The Battle of The Woodpile" from the Sullivans' point of view.

"It's pure snobbishness on the part of our wealthier neighbors,' said Timmy, a bearded character in dungarees and two pairs of pants. Julia, whose equally eccentric garb was a red bathrobe fastened by seven safety pins, said, 'Mr. van Rensselaer was a man of profound common sense. He died on his honeymoon while his wife has harassed us until we are unable to do our work here.'"<sup>543</sup>



After the Sullivans removed some mattresses and other debris from the property, the Board of Review petition was set aside, so the increasingly frustrated widow sued the Sullivans in Rhode Island Superior Court.<sup>544</sup> They then counter-sued, asserting that she had taken unauthorized photos of their property and unfairly attacked Julia for the way that she wore her hair.<sup>545</sup>

Mrs. van Rensselaer upped the ante, calling the Sullivans' nearby property a "breeding ground for mosquitos." She passed another petition to her wealthy neighbors, but this time, only 15 signed. Among those who turned her down was Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt.

The conflict soon became a populist cause célèbre between the haves and have nots.

By 1949, Timmy and Julia seemed to take the legal high ground after engaging Matt Faerber, a legendary Newport lawyer and international expert on military justice. Matt was a larger-than-life Damon Runyon character with a steel trap mind and an impeccable string of victories that he achieved after prepping for trial at Billy Goode's, a saloon around the corner from The Courthouse.

Having done his research on Lillian, who, for years, had run ads offering not just houses and estates, but furniture and collectibles for sale, Matt filed pleadings charging that in her war on the Sullivans, she was effectively a pot calling the kettle black. He presented the court with a newspaper ad (run earlier in the month) in which Lillian had offered for sale, "beds, tables, stoves, iron rails, washtubs, windows, ice boxes, radios, screen doors, (a) lavatory toilet, couch, a wooden mantle (and) beautifully carved Gothic Caen fireplace etc."<sup>546</sup>

The lead in an *AP* story on June 27<sup>th</sup>, 1949 read, "Mrs. Peyton van Rensselaer, whose feud with junk-collectors Timmy and Julia Sullivan, has enlivened an otherwise dull Newport social season, indignantly denied tonight that she's in the junk business herself."<sup>547</sup>

Still, Lillian was forced to admit that she had run the ad, arguing that "it wasn't a regular thing with her," but that she'd recently cleaned out the basement at The Hedges. "I would have given them to Timmy," she said, "only he would have piled them up in his yard."

She then predicted disaster if “the woodpile” was allowed to remain. “It certainly endangers all of Newport,” she speculated, “If a fire starts there, it will spread everywhere.”<sup>548</sup>

The matter dragged on until 1950, when a *détente* was reached. The Sullivans agreed to stop stock-piling lumber and junk on their premises and Lillian agreed to build a wall around The Hedges with an alternate exit that allowed her to come and go without passing “the eyesore.” One battle had come to an uneasy peace, but the one that erupted around her second estate would prove to be Mrs. van Rensselaer’s undoing.

## NEWPORT FIGHTS MILLIONAIRE’S HUT

Two years later, Mrs. van Rensselaer, then 70, enraged “the cliff dwellers of Society’s most carefully guarded stronghold” -- as *The New York Daily News* called her neighbors -- when she sought to convert Seaverge, the estate next to Rough Point, into an apartment hotel.<sup>549</sup>

She’d recently purchased the 26-room, five acre mansion for \$20,000 from A&P supermarket heir Huntington Hartford, whose mother, the Princess Pignatelli, had left it to him. *The News* quickly dubbed it, a “hut for middle-class millionaires”<sup>550</sup> and her plans to subdivide it prompted an attack from Newport’s Old Guard who saw the conversion as crassly commercial.

By now Lillian had decamped from The Hedges and moved into Seaverge at the other end of Bellevue, which she’d started to renovate.<sup>551</sup> But the opposition from her neighbors was so fierce that her only play before the Zoning Board was to recast herself as Society’s savior.

“I bought the property,” she argued at the hearing, “to protect the social sanctity of ancient Newport.” She’d done this, she declared, after meeting “a man named Stern whose expression and manner were obnoxious. He said he meant to run a hotel and bring in people I knew shouldn’t be in Newport.”<sup>552</sup>

It was a thinly veiled anti-Semitic threat in a town where Touro Synagogue was revered. She’d already alienated the Irish population. So with strong opposition from her neighbors, the Zoning Board turned her down and Lillian abandoned the scheme.

Three years later, her health had seriously deteriorated. The once formidable businesswoman, who had endured two legal losses at opposite ends of Bellevue Avenue, found herself a recluse on the top floor of Seaverge, attended only by a single servant named Billy.

That's the account I got from Harle Tinney; whose family agreed to take Seaverge off her hands for virtually the same price she'd paid for it. Part of the deal was that Lillian would continue to live there for the rest of her days. But at the age of 73, she still had a few moves left

"My father and mother-in-law took Seaverge," said Harle in an interview for this book, "with the understanding that it came with all furnishings included. Their initial goal was to open it as a museum. But in the week after the contract was signed, as they left to prepare for the move, Mrs. van Rensselaer arranged to sell off many of the contents of the house, worth tens of thousands of dollars, including an antique train set in the attic and more than 200 antique chairs. When they finally got back to the house, they found that it had been partially looted, but they felt sorry for the old woman who was then bedridden. She would call out at all hours of the day and night in a kind of mournful wail for 'Billy... Billy,' her one caretaker. Eventually Lillian's health failed to the point that she left Newport for Pennsylvania."<sup>553</sup>

The Tinneys persuaded the broker who'd sold them Seaverge to flip it and they were able to purchase Belcourt, a much more substantial estate, just north on Bellevue for the astonishing price of \$25,000. The sellers were Louis and Elaine Lorillard who had founded The Newport Jazz Festival in 1954 and, lest the reader needs to be reminded, they later purchased an estate they called Quatrel, after the four "L's" in Louis' name.<sup>554</sup> Located on Bellevue, directly across from Rough Point, it was the site where Eduardo Tirella's life ended.

After her return to Pennsylvania in early February 1956, Lillian Newlin van Rensselaer died. Her death certificate listed multiple causes attendant to a heart attack, including Parkinson's Disease, and persistent hypertension.<sup>555</sup> She went to the grave next to her husband, still in possession of her Knickerbocker surname, but was remembered more for taking on Timmy and Julia. This was the lead in her *Associated Press* obituary which ran in *The New York Times*:



PITTSBURGH, A.P. Mrs. Peyton J. van Rensselaer, whose court fight with a Newport RI neighbor Timothy (Timmy The Woodhooker) Sullivan attracted nationwide attention five years ago, died here yesterday at the home of her sister. A member of the Newport summer colony for 25 years, her annual Bal Masques in Palm Beach in the 1930's were attended by European royalty. But she confronted formidable adversaries in the junk dealer and his sister. <sup>556</sup>

In 1968, State Representative George Newbury, a former political science professor at De La Salle, introduced a resolution in the Rhode Island General Assembly requesting that a small park on Bellevue be named for the Sullivans. The State never acted on the measure.

Today, like the site where Eduardo Tirella was killed further down Millionaire's Row, any evidence of "The Battle of The Woodpile" has long been erased. But there's another part of Newport history involving the class struggles of the Irish that's worthy of note. It also involves a property with a troubled history and an Irish-American immigrant to Newport; albeit one of a slightly different pedigree. That story's ahead.

# Murdered “On the night before the rest of his life.”



**HOMICIDE AT ROUGH POINT** chronicles ex-ABC News correspondent and best-selling author Peter Lance's investigation into one of the least known, but infamous unsolved homicides in recent American history: the brutal death of gay interior designer and war hero Eduardo Tirella, outside the gates of Doris Duke's Newport, R.I. estate in October, 1966.

“**HOMICIDE AT ROUGH POINT** is a page-turning epic for our time. Proof that when a narcissistic billionaire assumes, they can get away with murder, there's a reporter out there willing and able to expose them.”

— Nicholas Pileggi, author of *Goodfellas* and *Casino*

“**HOMICIDE** is the best true crime book I've read in years; solving the horrific cold case murder of Eddie Tirella, a gifted Italian-American war hero who didn't deserve to die. Peter Lance is the most tenacious reporter I know. A must read!”

— John A. Gotti

**COVER UP:** “Without a doubt... had Mr. Lance been a special agent with the FBI working international terrorism cases in the 1990s, the al Qaeda terrorists who attacked America would either be in U.S. prisons or deceased.”

— Joseph F. O'Brien's FBI special agent (ret.) and co-author of *Boss of Bosses*

**DEAL WITH THE DEVIL:** “A blistering account of a cunning and brutal Mafia capo who triggered some of New York's most violent gang wars, all while serving as an informant for the FBI. Packed with revelations. It offers the most penetrating look into the inner workings of the Mafia since *The Valachi Papers*.”

— Nicholas Gage: former organized crime correspondent for *The New York Times*

