

Is Somebody Burning Up the Long Island Millionaires' Country Residences?

Investigation Begun to Find Out If the Recent Fires in the Homes of Mrs. Vanderbilt, Mr. Collier, J. P. Morgan's Partner and Many Others Were Incendiary--and Why?

FIVE POSSIBILITIES.

- An Insane Firebug.
- An I. W. W. Anarchist.
- An Ambitious Architect.
- A Greedy Residence-Building Contractor.
- A Revengeful Servant.

the fires cannot speak definitely of their suspicions on this point. The possibility that a discharged servant is responsible has also been suggested. It is pointed out that many of the houses burned belonged to persons who are especially objects of attack by advocates of violence. Several of the Long Island residents who lost their homes had been associated with the late J. Pierpont Morgan, whose name was a red rag to social discontent.

One of the first Long Islanders to suffer was Robert Bacon, former Ambassador to France and partner of Mr. Morgan. The Bacon mansion at Wheatley Hills, Westbury, L. I., was burned to the ground two

years ago. The cause of the fire was never ascertained.

A year later the beautiful Summer home of Henry F. Davison, another of Morgan's partners, was burned to the ground. This place was located at Peacock Point, near Glen Cove, on the Sound. It adjoined the estate of William D. Guthrie of the law firm of Guthrie, Cravath & Henderson, who have frequently represented the Morgan interests, and it was not far from the country place of J. P. Morgan, Jr.

So far the Guthrie place and that of J. P. Morgan, Jr., have not been molested, but only a few weeks ago, on April 14, the \$500,000 home of Paul D. Cravath, another member of the great law firm just referred to, was



PHOTO BY UNDERWOOD & UNDERWOOD, N. Y.

Mrs. Vanderbilt's Beautiful Home as

It Was When Completed and as It Appeared, Destroyed by Inexplicable Flames, the Morning She Was Going to Move in It.

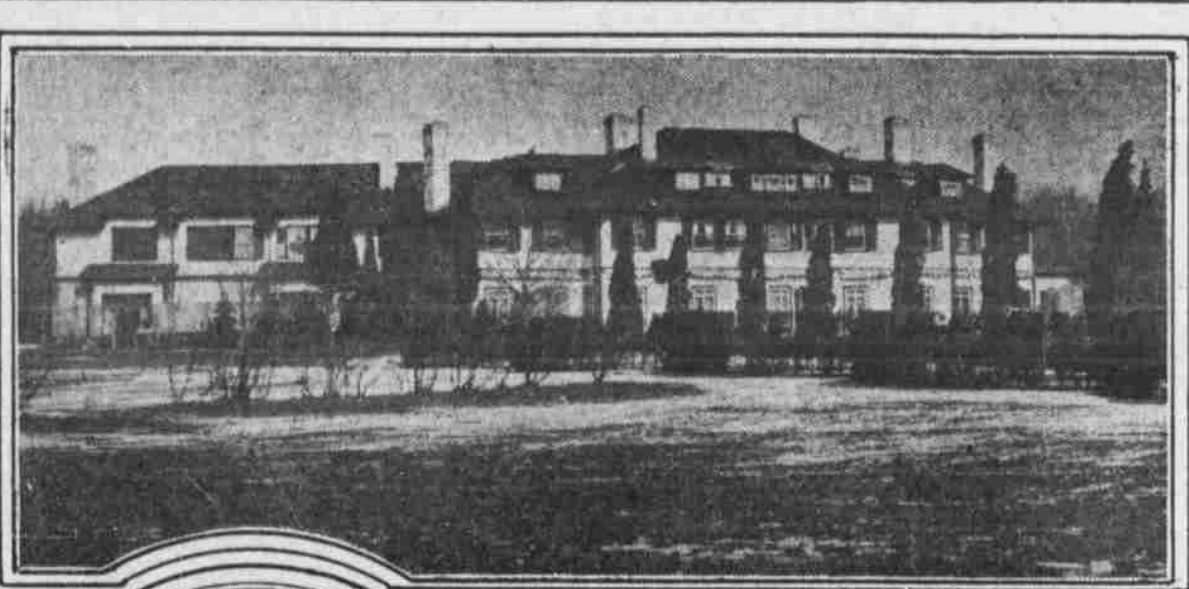


PHOTO BY UNDERWOOD & UNDERWOOD, N. Y.

Miss Vera Cravath, Daughter of Paul D. Cravath.



completely destroyed. This beautiful establishment was located at Locust Valley, a few miles to the south of the Davison place. No one knows how the fire started, although, as is usual in such cases, it was attributed to defective insulation.

The very same day the country estate of Raymond E. Bayle, at Hale-site, Huntington, a few miles from the Cravath place, was nearly destroyed by another mysterious fire, and the following day the mansion of Stephen E. Burgoyne, at Elm Point, Great Neck, and the colonial cottage of Mrs. Peter F. Collier, at Southampton, L. I., were reduced to ashes through fires occasioned no one knows how.

Add to these disasters the four fires of April 9 to 10, which were discovered successively on the place of E. R. Chapman, at Great Neck, L. I., the fire of April 3, which completely gutted the \$500,000 mansion of Mrs. Jessica Taylor, daughter of the late James R. Keene, at Cedarhurst, the fire of February 18, which destroyed Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt, Jr.'s establishment between Jericho and Westbury, and the fire of January 26, which started in the Port Washington ship yards and destroyed \$200,000 worth of pleasure yachts owned by millionaire residents.

In the case of the Chapman fires, there is no doubt at all that the fires were of incendiary origin. Four distinct efforts in every direction were made in two days, but the identity of the firebug has not yet been ascertained. Mr. Chapman is president of the Hudson Trust Company.

The theory that an anarchistic conspirator is responsible for the fires is based upon the fact that in every case the victims were millionaires. There have been no fires at all in the affected area among the homes of people of average means.

The possibility that the fires are the work of a "pyromaniac" is held by some persons, but no tangible evidence has yet been secured to support this view. The typical pyromaniac is one who is instigated principally by a desire to see the fire apparatus and firemen at work, but in these out of the way country places, which boast of no elaborate fire departments, this motive could hardly have been present.

While the turning out of a big array of fire fighting apparatus is not a characteristic feature of these country fires, however, they do occasionally support this theory, but the insurance man who believes the Long Island fires are the work of some unscrupulous builder or material man, who not having shared in the previous contracts hopes to profit by the rebuilding of the houses which he destroys.

In the same way some ambitious architect who had not shared in the giving out of plans might figure that if the houses had to be rebuilt he might this time be more lucky. No evidence at all has been secured thus far to support this theory, but the investigators are keeping it in mind.

That the fires may be due to wilfully careless building on the part of owners is the suggestion of a well-known technical publication. "Owners of pretentious country houses that burn are not deliberate incendiaries," says Safety Engineering, "but are they not passive incendiaries in accepting conditions that favor fires? Certainly they could have afforded homes built to endure; they had money to encourage the languishing craft of perpetuating beautiful architectural creations with lasting materials, and incidentally, to set a few good examples to a country that needs them badly."

Mistakes, it is pointed out, are often made in building a house which must eventually lead to a fire sooner or later. For instance, a plank of the flooring may project into a flue. The protruding plank in the flue would become as dry as tinder as a result of the heat to which it was subjected, and eventually a flying spark from the fire would ignite the plank and the destruction of the house would almost surely follow. No clue at all would be left to tell the tale.

Sometimes, of course, the carelessness of a carpenter might result in a similar situation, and in one of the fires in question, this possibility is being considered. This was the case of the Davison fire. The Davison place at Peacock Point is a three-story brick and white stone structure, one of the handsomest on Long Island. It had been closed all the Winter until the day before the fire, when Mrs. Davison, her two sons, Trubee and Harry, and three school chums of the sons, motored from New York to spend the day.

It was cool in the house and the boys decided to build a wood fire. Logs were lighted in a huge fireplace and the place was sufficiently warmed, they put out the fire and forgot all about it. Some hours later one of the caretakers saw smoke coming from the roof, and long before the firemen from Glen Cove arrived on the scene, the mansion was doomed.

Here was a case where a heated brick protruding into the flue might very readily have been the cause of the fire, but, of course, it was impossible to ascertain its actual origin.

The sixty-room mansion of Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt, Jr., which was destroyed on February 18, was a new house. A defective flue was given as the cause of the fire which destroyed it, but whether or not a protruding floor-plank figured in the case will never be known. Mrs. Vanderbilt did not have the chance to live even a day in her new house.

The disastrous fire in the Port Washington shipyards, which destroyed several valuable yachts, is believed to have started in an out-house. Whether an incendiary was responsible for it or not has never been definitely ascertained.

State Fire Marshal Ahearn is now conducting a vigorous investigation into the causes of these fires. While there is little hope that the ruins of the splendid mansions will furnish sufficient evidence to warrant arrests, witnesses are being examined with the idea of locating the culprit.

The owners of the other establishments in the vicinity are planning to form a vigilance committee to protect their property against the torch of the firebug, whoever he may be, and until he is apprehended no Long Island millionaire will consider his country residence safe.



Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt, Jr., Whose New \$5,000,000 Long Island Palace Was Burned Down Before She Could Occupy It.

WHAT is the secret of the long series of disastrous fires that has destroyed so many of the houses of the New York millionaire colony on Long Island?

Since the first of the year there have been nine fires, resulting in the complete destruction of that number of houses in the Long Island colony. The amount of property destroyed was over \$3,000,000. The number of fires before this year in the same district had been remarkably large for a number of years.

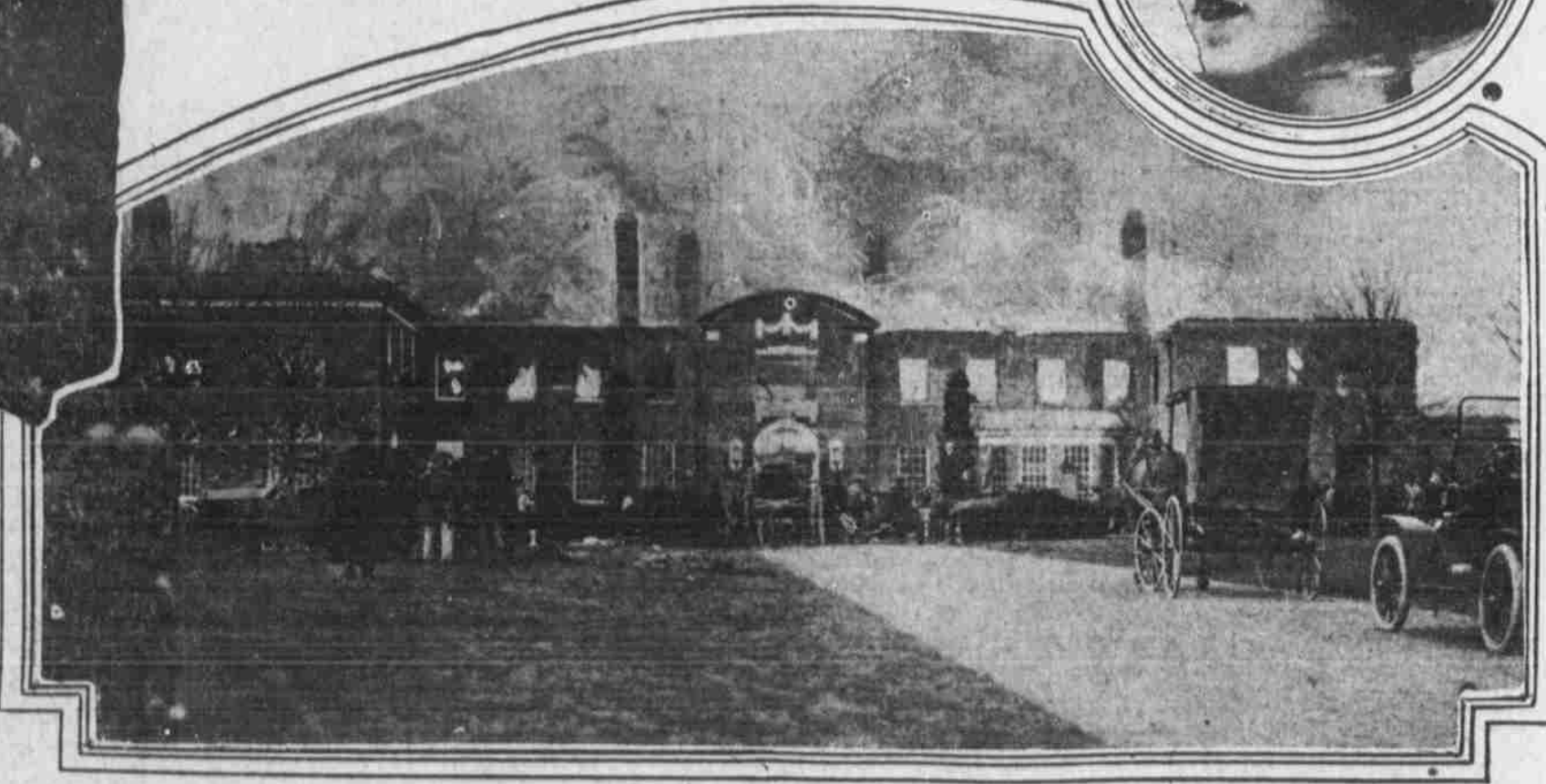
The fires have been so numerous, they have occurred in such close proximity to one another and they have made victims so evidently of the same set of persons that the suspicion inevitably arises that crime or at least some form of wrong doing is at the root of the trouble.

The owners of the houses are practically agreed that somebody is trying to burn their places down. The representative of Paul D. Cravath, one of the most conspicuous of the sufferers, has made this admission. He and his neighbors are now engaged in a search for the culprit or culprits. There are now on Long Island more persons of great wealth than can be found in any equal stretch of country in the world. The houses are more costly than any other equal area could show.

The possessors of all these palaces are thoroughly alarmed by the thought that somebody is plotting to burn their dwellings down in the dead of night, endangering their art treasures and even the lives of the occupants.

As to the motive for the incendiary plot there is still much uncertainty. Opinion varies between attributing the acts to some hater of the millionaire owners and to some wicked contractor or material man who wishes to make an opportunity to supply new material.

A view that finds considerable favor is that the fires are the work of anarchists or agitators of the I. W. W. type, animated by hatred of the millionaire class. The victims of



A Photograph of Mr. Paul D. Cravath's Locust Valley, Long Island, Mansion When the Mysterious Fire That Destroyed It, Was Nearly Out. Mr. Cravath Was One of the Legal Advisers of the Late J. Pierpont Morgan.

Why First Born Children Are Most Subject to Disease

THERE is an old, widely held belief that oldest children are liable to inherit the weaknesses of their parents. Unlike many old beliefs, this one has been supported by modern science. Professor Soren Hansen, director of the Danish Anthropological Survey, one of the leading eugenicists of Europe, in an article in the *Eugenics Review*, says:

"That the earliest born children are of inferior quality to the succeeding at birth is an indisputable and long-known fact of experience." The oldest children weigh less than the others, are more frequently born dead and of those that come into the world alive a much larger proportion die in the first year. They are more subject to tuberculosis, short sight and feeble-mindedness than later born children.

Professor Hansen examined the 3,522 tuberculosis patients of the Oresund Hospital, in Copenhagen, and found that 583 were first-born, 712 second-born, and 568 third-born. After taking many possible sources of error into consideration, he came to the conclusion that there were 64 per cent more first-born than

there would have been, if these enjoyed average health.

He believes that the weakness of the first-born is due to the fact that the channels of circulation in the mother are not yet sufficiently developed to afford all the nourishment needed to the child. There are also several secondary causes.

The first-born and the earlier children are more subject than the later to imbecility, epilepsy and similar defects, and Professor Hansen intends to investigate these points fully, as he has done with regard to tuberculosis.

The inferior quality of the first-born children is a matter of great importance to the present world-wide propaganda of eugenics. A tendency to limit families is constantly spreading among the more civilized nations. As families became smaller the proportion of first-born to the whole number of children must become larger.

Professor Hansen believes from the experience of France, that there is no hope of stopping the limiting of families. For a number of years France has offered prizes and other inducements to parents to produce large families, but without important results. Professor Hansen believes that our only resource is to take special care of the children, because the proportion of weakly first-born must become constantly greater.

It is scarcely necessary to say that all eugenicists do not share Professor Hansen's feeling that it is hopeless to create a sentiment in favor of large families. Most of them advocate families of considerable size in the interests of the race, and they believe that when the science of eugenics is better understood, their advice will be heeded.

The idea of having very large families or just as many children as possible is discouraged by eugenicists, because the object of eugenics is quality rather than quantity. But eugenicists are equally opposed to the idea of limiting families to one or two, or none at all.

Many eugenicists advise parents to aim at three, although when all conditions are favorable it is desirable to have more. The idea commonly held in France and other countries that two children to a family are sufficient to maintain the population at its present figure is entirely wrong. If fertile parents have only two children to a family, nothing is done to replace those adults who do not marry or are necessarily unproductive. It is not certain that three children to a family would maintain the population at its present standard, but it is believed that with better care of health this number might suffice.

By studying five thousand families in the prosperous north of England, industrial districts, Professor Fraser,

of the Eugenics Education Society, has reached some interesting conclusions bearing on first-born and later children. He finds that when the parents marry at the ideal period the third child has the best chance of being strong and able. He decides that the ideal period for marriage is twenty-five for a woman and between thirty and thirty-five for a man.

He thinks that a woman who marries at twenty-five will have three children by the time she is thirty. The third child born at this period has the best chances in life, because the mother has reached the fulcrum of her development and for several other reasons.

He finds that if parents are comparatively advanced in life, the children inherit something of their age and have less chance to live long. This tendency is more noticeable when the mother is middle-aged than when the father is. For instance, the children of mothers around the fortieth year do not have good chances of long life, although they may be well and strong. They inherit the maternal age.

Very young parents also bequeath some of their immaturity to their children and these are not likely to be of fine physical development, although they may be healthy and long-lived. A mother under twenty-three is regarded as immature in the Anglo-Saxon races.