



Peter C. and Helen Gallagher, their daughter Helen, known as "Chickie," and her fiancé James H. Rodgers Sr. in 1954.

Rodgers said of a 1960s and '70s childhood. "Christmases were spent with my father's side."

Despite the family's profile and wealth, Rodgers's mother hadn't known about the most public and controversial episode in the family's business history. In 1920, Goodwin-Gallagher Sand and Gravel Corporation and allied companies were prosecuted by the Justice Department under the terms of the Sherman Antitrust Act.

A story in the New York Times on Dec. 20 of that year ran with a subhead: "Eleven Individuals and Four Corporations accused of plot to Control Sand Trade." The charge was they had established their own "Board of Trade" and that it fixed prices. Rodgers said that it's clear from press interviews that his great-grandfather Peter and his brothers John, Joseph and Frank didn't understand quite what they were doing wrong. (Their father, Cornelius Gallagher, had recently retired.)

The Times reported: "The indictments charge that for three years the sand dealers named in the indictment have dug 'Cow-bay' sand on Long Island for use throughout a great part of Connecticut, New York and New Jersey."

"As a lawyer, I understand the legalities. But you can see that there's a disconnect with them. They just didn't get it," Rodgers said. "But they paid the fine."

"I find it a source of pride, a weird source of pride, that a child of the Famine had such a monopoly," he said.

A new company, Gallagher Brothers Sand and Gravel, was formed after the dismantling of the old one. Rodgers has no information about what Mimi Gallagher's brothers-in-law did after she established control of

the company, but he believes it's likely they continued to make money.

Reviewing the arc of the family's history, he said: "Goodwin-Gallagher or Gallagher Brothers supplied the bulk of the sand and gravel for most of what was built north of 14th Street, including the subways, the Queensboro Bridge, the Empire State Building and Rockefeller Center."

### 'HARDY STOCK'

"I don't know if we can confirm if Cornelius came over because of the Famine," Rodgers said of the patriarch.

The Friendly Sons of St. Patrick obituary said his birth took place on July 4, 1845. The New York Times, in a news report announcing his death, suggested he was born the following year and added that he left Ireland as a child.

"He was essentially a New Yorker, having lived all his life in the old Twenty-first Ward, where as a boy, early education

was received at a public school on East 25th Street," the Friendly Sons' obit reported.

"He saw his father lay out streets from 26th Street to 40th Street," it continued.

It's not clear, however, if "lay out" meant the father was a ditch digger or that he had a more supervisory role.

"It has been recorded that he [Cornelius] brought sand and gravel from Long Island by schooner, first in 1866," the Friendly Sons obit said.

Gallagher bought out the competition that was hauling sand and gravel from the bluffs of Port Washington, and then merged with another sand king named Goodwin.

"From the hardy stock from which he sprang Mr. Gallagher inherited an iron constitution, capable of great physical endurance and a capacity for hard, continuous work," the Friendly Sons added.

His wasn't the only hard work being done. At one point, the business was shipping in



Generations 5 and 6: Jim Rodgers with his daughter Oona in Schull, West Cork, in 1999.

800 Italian immigrant workers from the Lower East Side. The Italians, in time, preferred to live nearby and a school was built. The workers' side of the story also gets its due at Port Washington Public Library with the help of oral histories. Some of them record the same positive attitude towards Cornelius Gallagher that is evident in the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick obituary.

Rodgers said there were two surprises for him, his siblings and his cousins from the recently discovered Times news report and the Friendly Sons Gallagher obituary. The first was that the business empire went well beyond sand and gravel.

The obituary said: "He was vice-president of, and one of three who organized the National Conduit & Cable Company. To him much credit is due for the perfecting of lighting cables for traction and lighting purposes, as well as the completing and laying of the Broadway cable with its famous 'Post-Office loop.'

"He installed underground cable systems for telegraph and telephone companies as well as for the fire and police departments when the pole system was removed from our streets and the underground plan substituted," it said. "His fame spread to London, England, when he directed the first complete line from Beggars Bush to the Glasgow Bank of England. He was president of the Norristown, Bridgeport & Conshohocken Traction & Trolley Co., which in later years was known as the

Philadelphia Traction System."

The Times reported that National Conduit & Cable Company was sold to a Wall Street syndicate in 1917 for \$8 million (\$134 million in today's money), of which Gallagher got a reported quarter.

The second surprise was the headline of the Times news report: "C. GALLAGHER DEAD; HONORED BY POPE. The sub-head read: "Made Knight of St. Gregory by Pius XI in Recognition of his Activities as Layman."

"We had no idea he was religious," Rodgers said, referring to his generation of Gallagher cousins.

The Friendly Sons described him as a "devoted husband, a loving father and a distinguished Catholic gentleman."

Seven months later, Cornelius's great-granddaughter Chickie was born. When she was undergoing cancer surgery in 1989, Jim Rodgers and his father were told by doctors that they should leave and come back later. They anxiously paced the pathways of Carl Schurz Park near Gracie Mansion. Then, the older man spotted something out on the East River that immediately lifted his spirits. He declared it a good sign.

And indeed, Jim Rodgers Sr. lived another 15 years and his wife Chickie survives him. What the elder Rodgers saw was a tug boat pulling an old barge. As it got closer, the barge's lettering, which had faded over the decades, became more visible. Finally he could read: "Gallagher Bros."



Jim Rodgers in 2013.