

Galvin

One of the most well-known Irishmen in Newport's Fifth Ward was the gardener, Thomas Galvin. Galvin was born either in Ireland or England, but spent his early youth in England. At the age of 8, his family moved to Ireland, and in 1842, Thomas and his father moved to the United States. After three years in New York, they moved to Newport and purchased land on Spring Street in 1844 for \$500, where they established one of Newport's first floral and landscape businesses. The business flourished, and the Galvins were soon known as one of the area's premier gardeners. The senior Galvin died in 1864 and the son continued the business until his death in 1912.

Galvin was married on August 27, 1851 to Catherine Mary Kelly of Dublin Ireland. They had nine children but Mrs. Galvin died in 1871. His second wife was Mary Ann Nicholas, and they together had four more children.

Thomas Jr. began to make a specialty of landscape gardening. He was particularly interested in planting trees and he advertised in the Newport Daily News in July 1879 offering a selection that included English oaks, Norway maples, European sycamores, European beech, Japanese Ginkos, silver fir, scarlet oak, white American spruce, and, of course, Irish junipers.

Many of Newport's gardeners served apprenticeships under his direction. In 1876, there were 11 florists in Newport. Galvin at that time operated with a partner as Galvin and Geraghty. Thomas Geraghty later went into business for himself as did many of Galvin's other apprentices.

Galvin was soon employed in laying out and caring for the grounds of the many of the estates that were being established by the summer colony. and it is said that he designed the landscaping of the Newport Casino. The location of his house and gardens on Spring street, certainly lent itself to developing business with the houses on Bellevue Avenue. The gardens of the estates were an essential part of the Gilded Age in Newport, and the setting for much of the social life of the summer colony. The combination of the favorable climate found in Newport, and the care that could be given to the gardens were an important lure for many summer colonists who were horticulturists by avocation themselves. This hardworking, talented Irish immigrant, thus played a role in shaping a major era in Newport's history.