



Historic Cemetery Advisory Commission 2021 Annual Report

The Newport Historic Cemetery Advisory Commission is pleased to share a report of our efforts this past year. While the pandemic was challenging, we found people excited to be out in our historic burial sites helping, learning, learning, and enjoying.

Plans are underway for the 2022 and we look forward to welcoming you on April 13th for the start of the new season.

Activities/accomplishments in 2021

Stonework

1. **Stonework completed- 88 stones:**
 - Beyond the Gravestone (the official stone workers for the city) treated 23 marble and granite stones in the Braman cemetery. This work was funded by the Braman Perpetual Care Trust.
 - Beyond the Gravestone also treated 42 marble and granite stones in the Common Burying Ground (paid for with CIP city funds).
 - Volunteers Mary Jo Valdes and Korey Morris reset 23 marble stones in the Common Burying Ground. These stones were lying on the ground having been dislodged from their original place.
2. The commission coordinated the **return of 22 gravestones** from the collection of URI professor Ron Onorato. One stone went to South Kingstown, one to Barrington but the bulk of the collection was reset in Newport. Commissioners identified the historically correct location for each stone and made plans for stones (and fragments) with no known original location. Volunteers dug holes to receive the stones which were transported to Newport by students in Prof. Onorato's class.

Community engagement

1. In March, the commission **Zoomed a presentation** highlighting the 2020 work accomplished and the story of Alice Brayton's efforts that preserved the Governor Arnold burial site on Pelham Street.
2. The commission, led by Janet Parkinson and Scott Wheeler, has been **working with RIDOT** to minimize the intrusion of the proposed bike/walk path that will be constructed along the west edge of the Braman cemetery (NT003) and the Old City cemetery (NT004). The commission plans to be actively involved on site as construction begins and closely monitor the **removal of tree stumps**. We are also working with RIDOT to **replant** (at their expense) the border with a collection of native trees.
3. Rhode Island **cemetery clean-up effort** on April 10th in Newport was well attended by volunteers who trimmed plant life, filled holes with dirt and removed debris in the Braman cemetery
4. About 26 volunteers **cleaned about 200 stones** in Braman cemetery and the Common Burying Ground in May and June.

5. **Summer tours** (July, August) were conducted at Braman Cemetery and the Common Burying Ground, and **open houses** took place at the Coggeshall burial site. About 50 people enjoyed the events and were appreciative of the opportunity to engage with the sites.
6. More than 500 copies of the **self-guided tour of the Common Burying Ground** were taken this year.

Issues and concerns addressed

1. Temporary signage was installed and later replaced with granite curbing to discourage **inappropriate parking** in God’s Little Acre near the Ellery curve.
2. **Unleashed dogs** have become a problem in the Common Burying Ground. The city animal control officer has been asked to increase patrol of the area.
3. A **car crashed** into the wall of the **Coggeshall burial site** in September. Volunteers moved a few stones away from the crash area to protect them during the wall repair. The repair was completed by December 17th.
4. The commission approved a **privately funded assessment of gravestones in God’s Little Acre**.

The commission is pleased to welcome Deborah Peart as the newest member. Deborah has attended meetings and, helped with lean-up efforts and gravestone cleaning for a number of years.

Mary Jo Valdes stepped down from the commission at the end of her expiration of her second term. She has been instrumental in the success of the commission since it was reestablished. Hopefully she will continue to lend her expertise and efforts on behalf of the commission.

Newport historic burial sites have continued to be a place of passive recreation for residents as the grip of the pandemic lessened. The public has expressed appreciation to the commission for its efforts and interest in our burials sites remains strong.

We continue to be very appreciative of the support of the City Council and staff.

