

## **OUR VIEW**

**Irish museum deserves new home at fort**

**Given the role Irish immigrants played in shaping Newport, it makes sense for the Museum of Newport Irish History to have a permanent home in the city to showcase its collections.**

**Given the role Irish immigrants played in building Fort Adams, it makes sense for the museum to be located there, if possible.**

**The museum, founded in 1996, currently is in a temporary site at the Eisenhower House at Fort Adams State Park, but its membership would like to be able to move into the fort's former mule barn. The museum, a library and boardroom would be situated in a small section of the barn.**

**"It was mostly Irish labor that built the fort" in the 1800s, said Vince Arnold, the museum's president and one of its founders. "It's one of the reasons we would like to stay here at Fort Adams." Upon its formation, the Museum of Newport Irish History's first charge was to restore and preserve St. Joseph's Cemetery, known locally as the Barney Street cemetery. The large lot at the corner of Barney and Mount Vernon streets was the site of a small schoolhouse built in 1809 that was purchased by the Diocese of Boston in 1828 and became the first Catholic church in Newport.**

**In addition to maintaining the cemetery, the museum hosts an annual lecture series at La Forge Casino restaurant on Irish history and culture and conducts an annual tour of Irish-related sites in the city, using a bus donated by Viking Tours of Newport.**

**The museum has collected history books about the Irish and has created a computer program with data on the Irish who were born, married and died in the city since the 1840s. Members are recording interviews with residents of the old Fifth Ward, a neighborhood name that has endured long after the city's voting wards were whittled down in number.**

**"We're compiling an audio history about all phases of Irish immigration here and what the immigrants, their children and grandchildren contributed to the town," Arnold said. "We're also working on a DVD with a virtual tour of Irish Newport. We hope to get that out soon."**

**The museum has preliminary plans for a permanent site and is raising funds to support its planning and development.**

**While everyone can celebrate all things Irish on St. Patrick's Day and during the month of March, which has been designated Irish Heritage Month in Newport, the museum works year-round to preserve and promote Irish history in Newport. It deserves a true home from which to do its work.**