

Sign notes cemetery's significance for Irish

Daily News staff

NEWPORT — Museum of Newport Irish History members and friends gathered on the afternoon of Sept. 18 to celebrate the unveiling of a new historical informational sign at the Barney Street Cemetery, located at the corner of Barney and Mt. Vernon streets.

The cemetery is the final resting place of many of Newport's earliest Irish immigrants. The park-like setting on which it stands was the site of Rhode Island's first Catholic church and oldest parish, established in 1828. It was forerunner of today's St. Mary's Church on Spring Street, which was consecrated in 1849 to "The Holy Name of Mary, Our Lady of the Isle."

Museum board members Mike Slein and Carol Lepley spoke on behalf of the organization to the group of approximately 30. Board President Slein recounted the story of the site, so central to the history of the early Irish in Newport.

He reminded attendees the Museum of Newport Irish History restored the cemetery through an agreement with the Diocese of Providence and St. Mary's Parish. When the restoration was completed, the cemetery was rededicated by the Diocese in March 1999, and the museum continues to maintain and beautify the site with dedicated volunteers, many of whom were on hand.

The new informational sign was made possible by a generous gift from Carol Lepley and the Lepley Family, given in memory of her husband Steve, a longtime member of the museum's Board of Directors. Steve passed away in December 2017.

Carol Lepley memorialized her husband in her comments and spoke of the importance of the cemetery site to the community, her husband, her family, and many members.

After the conclusion of the ceremony, the group reconvened at Ancient Order of Hibernian Hall on Wellington Avenue to continue the celebration and to honor Jack Curran and Peter Martin, two retiring members of the museum Board of Directors, for their many years of



Members of the Museum of Newport Irish History Board of Directors pose next to an informational sign at the Barney Street Cemetery in Newport. PROVIDED BY JENNIFER CARTER/MUSEUM OF NEWPORT IRISH HISTORY

dedicated service.

Newport area residents and visitors are encouraged to stop by the Barney Street Cemetery to explore the site, view the new sign and the gravestones, many of which reflect the county and parish in Ireland where the deceased were born.

Community members are also invited to visit the

Museum's Interpretive Center at

648 Lower Thames Street, which is open Friday, Saturday, and Sunday from noon to 5 p.m., through Oct. 31, and at other times by appointment.

Visit newportirishhistory.org to learn more about the Museum of Newport Irish History, a 501c3 non-profit organization established in 1996.

Obituaries



John Canavan

John Patrick Canavan, 65, of Middletown and Newport's Fifth Ward, passed on to that elusive "best" fishing spot in the sky, unexpectedly on Saturday, September 18, 2021.

An avid sports fisherman, John could often be found around the Ocean Drive in search of "just one more striper." Born in Newport during a brutal St. Patrick's Day snowstorm, his mother was fond of recounting how she had to be carried out of the house while in labor, on a door that had to be removed from the home, arriving to the hospital just in time to give birth to John.

John was a member of the Rogers High School Class of 1974 and was awarded an Associates Degree in Creative Writing from Roger Williams Junior College in 1976. John loved writing and comedy, and was very talented in both categories. He was well known for his quick wit and his one line zingers. After college, he traveled to California to try his hand in television production and worked on several shows including the pilot for the original Pee Wee's Playhouse. He continued to write throughout his life and submitted articles to numerous magazines including Yankee and Field and Stream.

John also worked at St. Clare Home for many years where he entertained staff and residents with his jokes and stories. He was a gifted and gentle man who enjoyed making his many friends smile and laugh with his "Tall Tales" and unique view of life. He was a blessing to all that knew him.

John is survived by his sister, Mary Ellen Sabo of Bradenton FL, niece Elizabeth and nephew Christopher (Christie) and great nephews and niece Christopher, Will and Ella, as well as his former wife and friend, Patricia Smith Brett of Portsmouth.

He was predeceased by his parents John E. and Ann (Noonan) Canavan, and brother-in-law, Dennis Sabo.

Services for Mr. Canavan will be private. A memorial gathering will be held at a later time. In lieu of flowers, a donation to the Potter League For Animals, <https://www.potterleague.org> donate in John's memory would be appreciated. In a final tribute to John, please make an effort to make someone smile or laugh today.

Additional information available at www.memorialfuneralhome.com.



Judith E. Garlick

81, formerly of Mt. Hope Avenue, Jamestown, passed away Sunday, September 19, 2021 at Village House Nursing Home in Newport. Judy was born on November 17, 1939, a daughter of Frank R. and Elizabeth M. (Chesebro) Garlick. Judy attended Jamestown public schools, Rogers High School, and URI. Upon graduating from URI in 1961, she worked as a social worker for the State of RI in Newport for 28 years before retiring in 1989. Judy will always be remembered for her love of animals, especially the numerous cats she took in over the years. During her last years at home, she took on the awesome task of gathering information on all the members of grade school classes in Jamestown. They are now in the possession of the Jamestown Historical Society.

A private committal service will be held at a future date.

In lieu of flowers, donations in her memory can be sent to St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, P.O. Box 317, Jamestown, RI 02835, The Potter League for Animals, 87 Oliphant Lane, Middletown, RI 02842, The Jamestown Fire Dept., 50 Narragansett Avenue, Jamestown, RI 02835, or The Beavertail Lighthouse Museum, PO Box 83, Jamestown, RI 02835 would be greatly appreciated. Kindly visit www.FaganQuinnFuneralHome.com for information and online condolences.

Director

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plasty Today, and BMC Infectious Diseases journals.

He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgery, member of the American Association of Hip and Knee Surgeons, and the Orthopedic Research Society. Among his awards are the Infectious Diseases Society of America Edward H. Kass Fellowship and the Musculoskeletal Infection Society Jeannette Wilkins

Award.

"It is a privilege and an honor to be part of the Newport Hospital team," said Dr. Antoci. "I appreciate the very high level of care at Newport, the operating room efficiency, and the kindness and empathy of the nurses on the hospital floor. More importantly, I appreciate the local patient population and the people of Aquidneck Island."

To schedule a consultation with Dr. Antoci, call 401-845-4330.

Police

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Town Council President Paul Rodrigues declined comment on the State Police findings when contacted by The Daily News on Thursday morning.

Asked if State Police involvement was worth it, Rodrigues said: "Shawn (Brown, the town administrator) and Peter (Regan, the town solicitor) work for the council. You know, you can't investigate yourselves. So, you know, we had to take the proper protocol. It's not an easy thing to do, especially with a colleague, but it's the right thing to do."

Investigation surprises Flynn

Quay said the Flynnns hired counsel when they discovered the town requested a State Police investigation.

"Councilwoman Flynn was taken by surprise when during the May 3, 2021 Council Executive Session she learned that she herself was the subject of the 'Investigative Proceedings' item and then had to recuse. Thereafter, the Town Council, without any in-house inquiry or investigation, went directly to the Rhode Island State Police to ask them to investigate the Flynn's tax assessment," Quay said in her email. "This situation became increasingly exacerbating for the Flynnns after they read in the August 10, 2021 newspaper that, for reasons unknown, the Town subsequently hired at taxpayers' expense a private attorney to pursue the investigation."

Quay said she recently sent a preservation request and notice to the Town Council for executive session recordings, notes and minutes "because, as I understand it, the Town traditionally preserves only the minimum Executive Session documentation required, per statute. Any other documentation is usually destroyed once the agenda item is resolved. We have requested that everything be retained and made public in an effort to bring clarity to the process that the Town Council has followed in this situation."

Quay said in a subsequent email to The Daily News that while she's "unsure if some of the exact dates as to when inspections were done are accurate," overall, "the statements made in the report are correct."

State police report findings

According to the police report, Investigator Gerard Ratigan called Regan, the town solicitor, on June 1 "regarding his request for assistance." Ratigan was provided "a timeline and supporting documents for review."

A review of the documents showed that building per-

mits were issued for an addition to the Flynnns' 34/38 Warren Avenue property in May 2015, according to the police report.

"In August 2016, the (Flynnns') property was assessed at \$570,300," the police report says.

The Flynnns appealed to Tax Assessor George Durgin, "who subsequently visited the property in December 2016 and observed the addition was still under construction." Durgin reduced the assessed value to \$474,300.

The Flynnns appealed the valuation again, this time to the Tax Assessment Review Board, and it was reduced to \$449,300 in Feb. 2017, according to the police report.

"This occurred prior to Flynn serving on the Planning Board and being elected to the (Town Council)," the police report says. "It stayed at that valuation until May 2021."

Included in the documents that Ratigan reviewed were two annual reports for the tax assessor — one for the year ending on Dec. 31, 2018, and the other for the year ending Dec. 31, 2020.

"Both forms signed by Michael and/or Terri Flynn and attested to a property value of \$449,300," according to the police report.

Ratigan asked Durgin about these forms and "(he) stated it was filed by property owners in the event the valuation dispute ended up in Superior Court," the police report says.

Durgin told police no one had been in the house since he inspected it in December 2016, according to the police report; the recent revaluation was done without any in-home visits due to the pandemic.

"(Durgin) was asked if anyone had ever talked to him about lowering the valuation, keeping the low valuation in place, or had any discussions about the valuation from February 2017 until the recent allegations were made in April of 2021. He stated no one ever mentioned it nor pressured him in any way about the valuation," the report says.

Police also spoke with Chris Costa, the town's building official.

"Costa stated that after permits are issued his office is usually notified when work is completed and they then conduct a final inspection of the work performed," the report says. "He stated there is not a system in place to monitor the progress of permits issued to see if the work is complete."

Police asked Costa about the Flynnns' property. He told the investigator he'd been there earlier this year "to conduct a rough electrical inspection. At that time, construction still was not complete. As of June 4, 2021, he does not know if the work is complete."

The report ends with: "Closed, no crime."

A Personal Tribute

It is often difficult to know just what to say or do when a person has lost a loved one.

Compose a heartfelt personal message and post it to an online Guest Book at newportri.com/obituaries

The Newport Daily News