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Museum of Newport Irish History unveils historical informational sign at Barney Street Cemetery



Museum of Newport Irish History
NewportIrishHistory.org

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NEWPORT — Museum of Newport Irish History members and friends gathered on Saturday, 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, the 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 Stein and Carol Lepley spoke on behalf of the organization to the group of approximately 30. Board President Stein recounted the story of the site, so central to the history of the early Irish in Newport. He also reminded attendees that 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 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 who passed away in December 2017. Mrs. 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 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 October 31, and at other times by appointment.

Visit newportirishhistory.org to learn more about the Museum of Newport Irish History.

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