



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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## **East Providence invests in the restoration of historic Newman Cemetery**

EAST PROVIDENCE, RI – After a request for proposal (RFP), the City of East Providence has hired Westport, Massachusetts-based company TNT Gravestone Solutions to repair 112 grave markers and two box tombs at Newman Cemetery.

The City of East Providence will use \$50,000 of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to pay for the restoration efforts.

Newman Cemetery, owned by the City and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is one of East Providence's most valuable historical and cultural resources.

Newman Cemetery is considered the largest representation of 17th-century gravestones throughout Rhode Island, representing the changing styles and fashions in funerary art (art that is created to celebrate the life of the dead) beginning in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Newman Cemetery has the largest collection of stones by Rehoboth carver George Allen Sr. and his son Gabriel, where visitors can find a variety of grave markers from simple, weathered slate headstones to elaborate Victorian-era monuments adorned with intricate carvings.

Some of the prominent markers located at Newman Cemetery include William Carpenter, an original proprietor of the Rehoboth settlement and one of the oldest located on site. Also located at Newman Cemetery is John Hunt Sr., the namesake of Hunt's Mills, which he owned from 1713 until his death in 1751, as well as Jabez Bowen, a box tomb-style grave marker considered a masterpiece carved by George Allen.

As of today, the gravestones at Newman Cemetery are showing signs of significant deterioration, fallen gravestones, prominent cracks and ground covered gravestones.

TNT's restoration efforts will include cleaning, foundation and structural repairs with technical assistance provided by the East Providence Historical Society and Friends of Newman Cemetery.

"This is great news for the City that Newman Cemetery is being recognized as an important historical and cultural resource worthy of preserving," Sandra Turgeon of Friends of Newman Cemetery said. "It is also the resting place of 145 Revolutionary War soldiers as well as some of the most prominent people involved in the founding of the town.

"Newman is also the site of the work of many of the area's prominent 18<sup>th</sup> Century gravestone carver," Turgeon added. "Hopefully this project will further enhance the public's understanding of the history of East Providence."

TNT Gravestones Solution have an extensive reputation with restoration and cleaning of gravestones, having worked on over 12,000 since 2019.

"The Newman Cemetery is among the most historically significant burial grounds in all of New England, and one that I have admired for more than 30 years," Todd Baptista, Project Manager for TNT Gravestone Solutions said.

"The history of the site and those who rest here, along with the craftsmanship of the colonial era gravestone carvers is fascinating and inspiring."

Work is expected to begin in early Spring of 2025 and continue through the Fall.