



City of New Bedford
Jonathan F. Mitchell, Mayor

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P R E S S R E L E A S E

NB Beautiful to Present "Rediscovering the Griffin Street Cemetery":

*an AHA! night presentation on the oldest cemetery in New Bedford,
and the effort to rediscover its history and beautify the landscape.*

New Bedford, Massachusetts- New Bedford Beautiful will present “*Rediscovering The Griffin Street Cemetery*”—a discussion of historical research and restoration efforts at New Bedford’s oldest cemetery, at Gallery X, 169 William St., New Bedford, this Thursday, May 12th, at 5:30 p.m. The presentation will take place during AHA! Featured speakers include Anne Louro, Historic Preservation Planner for the City of New Bedford, Joan Barney of the New Bedford Public Library, and Mary Rapoza of the New Bedford Dept. of Parks, Recreation and Beaches.

The Griffin Street Cemetery, which is located near where South Second Street intersects present-day Griffin Court, was recently listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Founded in 1802, Griffin Street Cemetery is the oldest surviving burial ground in the city of New Bedford.

Also known as the Old South Burying Grounds and the Common Burying Grounds, it remains the only cemetery of four known to have existed within the district of early Bedford Village. Although there are approximately 230 extant gravestones, it is estimated that there may be at least 1,000 unmarked graves. These unmarked graves include whalers, shipbuilders, Revolutionary War veterans, members of the founding families of the region from all of the Village’s ethnic groups, and a large number of children.

Griffin Street Cemetery includes markers by Isaac Thompson Jr., Daniel Gerrish, and John B. Taylor, prolific early carvers in the region. The stone walls on the north, west and south sides of the cemetery were constructed by the Federal Works Project Administration (WPA) in 1938 and replaced a wooden fence.

The full program is as follows:

- I. Welcome and Introductions; Lynn Coish, Co-chair of New Bedford Beautiful
- II. Overview; Mary Rapoza, Director, New Bedford Parks, Recreation and Beaches
- III. History of the Griffin St. Neighborhood, and Overview of New Bedford Cemeteries; Anne Louro, Historic Preservation Planner for the City of New Bedford

- IV. History of the Griffin St. Cemetery; Joan Barney of the New Bedford Public Library
- V. Next Steps: Opportunities for involvement in project; Co-chair of New Bedford Beautiful Jessica Bregoli, and Attorney Jim Lopes

The presentation is sponsored by New Bedford Beautiful, a public-private city improvement committee formed by Mayor Jon Mitchell in 2013. The volunteer group is dedicated to help make New Bedford a more livable city by coordinating initiatives aimed at public art, tree planting, litter removal, and other efforts. Since its inception, New Bedford Beautiful has led revitalization efforts in public art, historic preservation, and numerous other areas to highlight the city's culture and maintain its beauty.

Preservation efforts in the cemetery were made possible by numerous partners of New Bedford Beautiful including: the New Bedford Preservation Society, the United Way of Greater New Bedford, AHA!, Gallery X, Operation Clean Sweep, the New Bedford Public Library, RAPPP (Responsible Attitudes toward Pregnancy, Parenting & Prevention), the City of New Bedford, and others.

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