

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only

received OCT 24 1980

date entered NOV 28 1980

Continuation sheet 28

Item number 7

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NAME: Newman Cemetery

LOCATION: Newman and Pawtucket Avenues

OWNER: City of East Providence, City Hall, Taunton Avenue, East Prov. R.I.
02914

DESCRIPTION:

Newman Cemetery is located at the southwest corner of Newman Avenue and Pawtucket Avenue (U.S. Route 1A and State Route 114) in a suburban neighborhood containing residential, strip-commercial and institutional buildings to the east and south; apartment towers and industrial buildings to the west; and other cemeteries and the Newman Congregational Church (see inventory entries) to the north. Stone walls and rows of trees run along the Newman and Pawtucket Avenue sides of the cemetery; the western boundary is defined by a stone wall and chain-link fence and the southern boundary by a chain-link fence. Originally set off between 1643 and 1658 as a common burial ground for the early settlers of Rehoboth, the cemetery occupied a small plot of land close to the first meeting house (1646-ca. 1675) near the center of the Ring of the Green, the town common. The cemetery was subsequently enlarged in 1680, 1737, and 1790.

The southern section, known as Pastor's Lot or Hunt Cemetery, was established in 1850 as an independent graveyard and was originally separated from Newman Cemetery by a stone wall; today the wall is gone and the yards have been consolidated. The cemetery contains no notable landscaping features such as winding paths, ponds, or ornamental plantings. The southern (Hunt Cemetery) section has a simple rectangular grid of dirt lanes providing vehicular access to the individual plots, with one lane continuing through to Greenwood Avenue. The northern (original Newman Cemetery) section has a single crooked dirt lane running north-south through its center.

In the oldest portion, near the northwestern corner of the cemetery, the stones are not consistently oriented and face in every direction. In other parts of the cemetery the stones are organized in north-south or east-west rows. Near the northern edge of the cemetery are two earth-covered mounds with stone fronts. These are above-ground tombs—the eastern one a receiving vault built by the cemetery proprietors in 1825 and the western one the Slack mausoleum built in 1826. The former Hunt Cemetery contains many twentieth-century monuments and burials are still made in this section.

DATES: 17th through 20th centuries

SIGNIFICANCE:

Newman Cemetery is one of East Providence's most valuable historical

(See Continuation Sheet #29).

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and cultural resources. Since the burial of William Carpenter in 1658-- the first recorded interment here--it has been continuously used by the community and serves as the resting place for many locally prominent citizens. Here are the graves of the Reverend Samuel Newman, founder of Rehoboth and first pastor of Newman Congregational Church, and of other early Rehoboth settlers, the only extant sites associated with these individuals and their lives. A remarkable number of grave markers from the 1600s survive at Newman Cemetery--certainly among the largest, if not the largest, group of seventeenth-century gravestones in Rhode Island today.

With other cemeteries in the vicinity, Newman Cemetery provides a historically and visually appropriate context for the nearby Newman Congregational Church (see inventory form). These graveyards also preserve a sense of the original openness of the Ring of the Green (Rehoboth town common), the outer edges of which were sold off by the town in 1812 and subsequently built upon by private developers.

The gravestones of Newman Cemetery serve as an encyclopedic guide to changing styles and fashion in funerary art. The seventeenth-century stones exhibit great variety in size and shape, but all are very crude and many are inscribed only with the initials of the deceased and the year of death. Others contain full names and dates, and a few rude decorative carvings. Especially noteworthy are the rough, sheared-off stone pillar marking the grave of "J. Kingsley 1674," the gravestone of "Zacharia Carpenter" with its archaic cherub's head, and the monument of "David C" (1701) with its unique geometric ornament of incised lines and drill holes. Eighteenth-century markers, generally of dressed slate, range from upright headstones with death's head, and cherub's head motifs and those carved with portrait busts of the deceased (for example, gravestone of Molly Humphry, 1793) to flat slabs flush with the ground decorated with coats-of-arms in low relief (gravestone of William Jones, Sr., 1793). Nineteenth-century stones include the usual slate slabs with willow and urn motif, popular in the Federal period, and later examples such as marble obelisks, which became popular during the Romantic era. These factors combine to make Newman Cemetery a historical and cultural artifact of transcendent importance.

ACREAGE: 10.25 acres

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION: Assessor's plat 33, Lot 20

UTM:

| | | | |
|----|-----|---------|---------|
| A) | 19: | 304860: | 4634550 |
| B) | 19: | 304740: | 4634540 |
| C) | 19: | 304670: | 4634290 |
| D) | 19: | 304910: | 4634310 |

(See Continuation Sheet #30).

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LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: State

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