

2. Only the Tour

Getting There and Background

The Old Jewish Cemetery in Newport, RI is located on Touro Street, across from the Viking Hotel. It is about two blocks southeast of the Touro Synagogue at the corner of Touro and Kay Street.

Newport, Rhode Island was one of the earliest homes of Jews in America. It is home to the Touro Synagogue, probably the most famous synagogue in North America. Near the Touro Synagogue is arguably the second most famous Jewish site in Newport. The sign calls it "The Colonial Jewish Cemetery of New England". It is also referred to as just "The Old Jewish Cemetery of Newport". The purpose of this book is to make the cemetery a more accessible tourist attraction. As of 2002, the Old Jewish Cemetery in Newport is locked and is inaccessible to the public because of the age of the monuments and the perceived fragility.

As a result, the "tour section" of the book presumes that the cemetery will be locked and the viewer will be standing at or near the front gate. Instructions for viewing will be given relative to that spot.

This section is an overview of what one might see at the cemetery. For those interested in greater detail, section references are given to other chapters that elaborate on the subjects. Each monument is referenced by a number for easier lookup in Chapter 10. For abbreviations, numbers, years, months and transliterations, see Appendix A. An alphabetical cross-reference is in Appendix B.

Cemetery Gates and Fences

Jewish cemetery gates tend to include Jewish themes, such as a menorah, a Jewish Star, Ten Commandments or a phrase, either in Hebrew or English from the Bible. The gate built in 1843 and shown below is attractive, but there is nothing typically Jewish about it. Just to the left and just to the right of the main gate are obelisks. Obelisks are typical 19th century graveyard symbolism, but again, not Jewish.

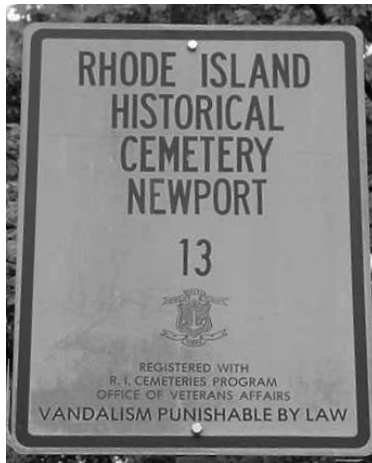


Below is shown the wall along the side of the cemetery just to the left of the gate. There are obelisks between the sections of wrought iron fence. The tallest obelisk toward the right of the photograph is the monument of #5, Judah Touro. For more details on these cemetery gates, see Chapter 3, sub-section titled, "Gates and Fences".

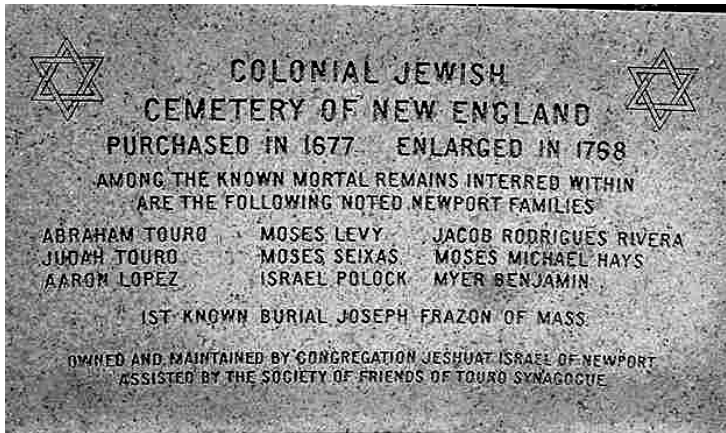


Signs by the Gate

Rhode Island provides the following historical marker, just to the right of the gate.



Just to the left of the above sign is the sign shown below:



Transcription of the above monument/sign:

✪ Colonial Jewish ✪
 Cemetery of New England
 Purchased in 1677 Enlarged in 1768
 Among the known mortal remains interred within
 are the following noted Newport families

Abraham Touro	Moses Levy	Jacob Rodrigues Rivera
Judah Touro	Moses Seixas	Moses Michael Hays
Aaron Lopez	Israel Pollock	Myer Benjamin

1st known burial Joseph Frazon of Mass

Owned and maintained by Congregation Jeshuat Israel of Newport
 Assisted by the Society of Friends of Touro Synagogue

Back of the above sign/monument:



Erected 1986
 Cemetery Restoration Committee of
 Society of Friends of Touro Synagogue
 Chairman Bernard Kusinitz

Notes:

1. The back of the monument shown above indicates that it was added in 1986.
2. The Jewish Stars on this monument are the only Jewish Stars or obviously Jewish art anywhere in this cemetery. All other art or decorations are secular or even marginally Puritan.
3. "Jeshuat Israel" means "The Salvation of Israel" which is the "official name" of the congregation that is housed in the Touro Synagogue.
4. The Cemetery was purchased in 1677 through efforts of Mordechai Campanal and Moses Israel Paeheco¹.

The following is a little historical background of the ten names mentioned on the sign/monument just described:

Joseph Frazon, first known burial: The oldest extant monument in the cemetery is #45, Rachel Rodriguez Rivera, dated 1761. For more on burials between 1677 and 1761, see Chapter 4, section titled, "Who is There".

Little is known of Mr. Frazon, except that according to a diary reference, he died in Boston on Saturday, February 5, 1704². At the time, his remains were brought to Newport, ostensibly because there were no Jewish cemeteries that were closer to Boston.

¹ Note that spellings of proper names from this era are inconsistent. In other sources, Paeheco is also spelled: Pacheco, Paixico, etc. Similarly, names such as Alvares and Rodrigues are spelled interchangeably as Alvarez and Rodriguez.

² Farrar, Straus and Giroux, *Diary of Samuel Sewall* (1973), 497. Note: the author has not seen this reference but is citing a reference to this book from an article by Bernard Kusnitz, titled, *The Enigma of the Colonial Jewish Cemetery in Newport, Rhode Is land: Myths, Realities and Restoration*, Rhode Island Historical Notes, (Vol. 9, No. 3., November 1985): 229.

#8. Abraham Touro (1771 - 1822): Merchant, philanthropist and Brother of #5, Judah Touro. In his will, he left \$100,000 to his brother Judah, which Judah would only use for charitable purposes³.

#5. Judah Touro (1775 - 1854):



Son of #7, Rev. Isaac Touro and #7, Reyna Hays. While he chose to be buried in Newport, he achieved his financial success in New Orleans as a merchant and a shipper. He received fame for his philanthropy in general, his Jewish philanthropy in particular as well as his American patriotism. His \$10,000⁴ donation financed the completion of the Bunker Hill Monument in Boston.

³ Morris Schappes, *Documentary History of the Jews in the United States, 1654-1875*, (Citadel Press, NY, copyright 1952) pg. 660, note 54.

Note also, that according to University of Oregon URL: http://oregonstate.edu/Dept/pol_sci/fac/sahr/cv2000.pdf, the donation is approximately equivalent to \$1,400,000 dollars in the value 2000 CE dollars.

⁴ Ibid URL: \$200,000 in the value 2000 CE dollars.

#19. Aaron Lopez (1731 - 1782):



Successful merchant and patriot...