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**FOUR CEMETERIES IN NEW BEDFORD APPROVED FOR NOMINATION TO THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

Secretary of the Commonwealth William F. Galvin is pleased to announce that the Massachusetts Historical Commission approved Griffin Cemetery, the Jewish Cemetery, Oak Grove Cemetery, and the Rural and Friends cemeteries (nominated as one property) in New Bedford for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places at its December 11, 2013, meeting. The nomination will be submitted to the National Register of Historic Places at the National Park Service in Washington, DC, for final consideration and designation.

“The Massachusetts Historical Commission is dedicated to preserving the Commonwealth’s rich historic, architectural, archaeological, and cultural resources,” Secretary Galvin said. “Inclusion of these cemeteries in the National Register will help to protect a wealth of resources that illustrate the city’s history, as well as attitudes toward death over time and across a variety of religious traditions.”

Founded in 1802, **Griffin Street Cemetery** was not the first cemetery in New Bedford Village, but it is the oldest surviving one. It is also the only cemetery remaining in the commercial core of the city, as earlier burial grounds have been relocated. Despite repeated pressure since the late 1840s to relocate those interred there, the Griffin Street Cemetery has remained on its original site. The cemetery exemplifies the type of burial ground common in American cities before the Rural Cemetery Movement of the 1830s. With a number of immigrants and people of color interred here, it also represents the ethnic and integrated nature of the pre-1830s community in New Bedford. The last significant improvement to its grounds, a stone wall created by the Works Projects Administration, occurred in 1937.

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**Rural Cemetery** (founded in 1837) and adjacent **Friends Cemetery**, nominated together, cover 91.35 acres of land on the west side of New Bedford, where the city borders the town of Dartmouth. The cemetery land was acquired over time through numerous deeds, and is irregularly shaped. The Friends Cemetery, a parcel of 2.27 acres owned by the New Bedford Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends, abuts the oldest section of Rural Cemetery on the south, and is managed by the City of New Bedford. Together, the cemeteries reflect the marked differences in Quaker and non-Quaker attitudes toward memorializing the dead.

**Oak Grove Cemetery** covers 30.89 acres in the northwest part of New Bedford, about two miles from the city center. The earliest part of the cemetery, on the south side of Parker Street, was created in 1843. The newer section is on the north side of that street, and was acquired between about 1870 and 1896. Burials in Oak Grove Cemetery reflect the city's extensive maritime past, and the cemetery also contains a significant African American section.

The **Jewish Cemetery**, currently owned by two New Bedford Jewish congregations and one secular entity, is 24.45 acres in size. The burial place, an assemblage of the cemeteries of four New Bedford synagogues and one mutual aid society, began with the 1898 purchase of about 1.5 acres by Chesed Shel Emes ("Kindness for Truth"), the second Jewish congregation in New Bedford. From 1899 into the current day, this has been the primary burying ground for Jewish people in greater New Bedford. Several Holocaust survivors are buried in the Jewish Cemetery, and in 1985, the Jewish Federation of Greater New Bedford installed a Holocaust memorial here.

By nominating these five cemeteries to the National Register of Historic Places, the City of New Bedford hopes to promote a broader appreciation of the historic and artistic significance of these important resources. New Bedford's cemeteries have experienced continued vandalism, but the city's cemetery staff and a non-profit group have begun an aggressive effort to restore damaged stones and monuments. Listing of the cemeteries in the National Registers of Historic Places will enable the city to seek Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF) support to repair several public burial tombs.

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The New Bedford cemeteries are among 10 historic resources around the Commonwealth approved for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places by the Massachusetts Historical Commission at this meeting.

Secretary Galvin serves as Chairman of the 17-member board, which meets regularly and considers historic resources eligible for the National Register four times a year.

The National Register is the nation's official listing of significant historic resources. In Massachusetts, there are over 70,000 properties listed in the National Register. The Massachusetts Historical Commission has been administering the National Register of Historic Places program in Massachusetts since 1966.

The Massachusetts Historical Commission is the office of the State Historic Preservation Officer and the State Archaeologist. It was established in 1963 to identify, evaluate, and protect important historical and archaeological assets of the Commonwealth. Visit our website to learn more about the Commission's programs ([www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc)).

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