



*Welcome to*

## THE COLONIAL JEWISH BURYING GROUND

RI Historic Cemetery #NT13

- The site was established in 1677 and expanded in 1768.
- There are 42 grave markers.
- There is no stone for the oldest documented burial (1704).
- The oldest dated stone is 1761.
- The most recent dated stone is 1866.
- The slate stones carved in Newport are identical to the design used for members of other religions but may have Hebrew, Ladino, Latin, Spanish or Portuguese inscriptions.

This is the oldest existing Jewish burial site in America.

*For additional information contact the Touro Synagogue Foundation- [tourosynagogue.org](http://tourosynagogue.org) or visit the Loeb Visitors Center at 52 Spring Street.*

The entrance gate to the Colonial Jewish Burying Ground in Newport (pictured on the left) was designed by architect Isaiah Rogers under the patronage of Judah Touro and installed in 1842.

The gate and fencing replaced an earlier enclosure that had been funded by Abraham Touro, Judah's older brother.

Rogers designed an almost identical gate for the entrance to the Granary Burying Ground located in Boston (image below).

Egyptian themed funeral elements were popular at the time. The winged orb at the top of the gate is one commonly used. The inverted torches symbolize an extinguished life.

Rogers was one of America's most productive early architects. His works includes many public and private buildings, bridges, and monuments and can be found throughout the country.

Rogers had a personal connection in Newport. His daughter, Emily Jane, married Nathan H. Gould, a local businessman. The Gould family served as the caretaker of Touro Synagogue while it was closed (1822-1880s).



**Emma Lazarus** (1849-1887) was an American translator, poet, author, and activist.

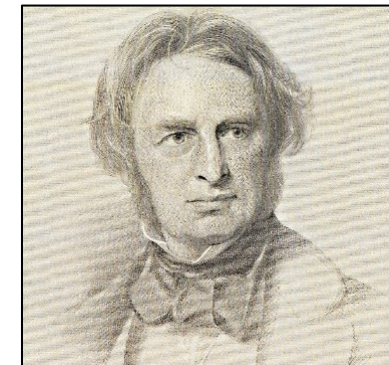
She was descended from Sephardic Jews who settled in New York and Newport early in the colonial era.



Lazarus is best known for her sonnet "The New Colossus" (1883) which was cast in bronze and affixed to the base of the Statue of Liberty.

The Lazarus family summered in Newport and visited the synagogue (1867). In 1871 she published "In the Jewish Synagogue at Newport"

**Henry Wadsworth Longfellow** also visited and wrote about the burial site in 1854.



His visit in July of 1852 was during the time the synagogue was closed.

*This selection of graves is visible from the sidewalk along Kay Street or Bellevue Avenue.*



1- **Moses Seixas** (1743c-1809) In 1790 Seixas wrote a letter of welcome to President Washington who was visiting Newport. His letter prompted a response from Washington which affirmed the concept of religious freedom not yet included in the United States Constitution.

2- **Judah Touro** (1775-1854) was the youngest son of the first religious leader of the Newport congregation, Isaac Touro and his wife Reyna. He is one of America's first great philanthropists donating funds to numerous organizations and projects. Most notably, Touro contributed to the Bunker Hill monument in Boston and the park in Newport with the stone tower. Touro's fortune was earned as a merchant in New Orleans. Institutions with the Touro name honor him.

3- **Rebecca Touro Lopez** (1779c-1833) was the daughter of Isaac and Reyna Touro. She fought to have her brother Abraham's bequest to the synagogue implemented. Late in her life she married Joshua Lopez, son of Newport's richest merchant, Aaron Lopez.

4- **Reyna Hays Touro** (1743c-1787) was a daughter of Judah and Rebecca Hays and later married Isaac Touro, the religious leader of the Newport Jewish congregation. The family was living in Jamaica in 1783 when Isaac died. Reyna relocated her children to the home of her brother in Boston.

5- **Abraham Touro** (1774c-1822) was the oldest son of Isaac and Reyna Touro. He bequeathed funds to maintain the synagogue and pave the street between it and the Burial Ground which led to the street name being changed to "Touro Street." He made his living in Boston as a banker, a trade he learned from his uncle, Moses Michael Hays.



**The Hayes Family-** The family plot is fenced-in behind the Touro monuments.

**Moses Michaels Hays** (1739-1805) was the son of Sephardic Jewish immigrants and a wealthy banker and philanthropist. He served as vice-president of congregation in New York. In 1766 he married **Rachel Myers** (1738c-1810), sister of

American silversmith Myer Myers. The couple moved to Newport in 1769. His sister later married Isaac Touro. Fearing British occupation Hays relocated the family to Boston in 1776. There he helped establish the New England Masonic movement and in 1792 was elected as Grand Master, with Paul Revere as his deputy. Hays was a founder of the what is today part of the Bank of America. Following the death of Isaac Touro, Reyna Touro and her children moved in with Hays and his family in Boston. Her death in 1787 left the care and upbringing of the children to Hays.

### **The Rivera family**

**Abraham Rodriguez Rivera** (?-1765) was a Sephardic Jew who arrived in New York with his family in the early 1700s. He served as president of the New York Jewish congregation. His son, **Jacob Rodriguez Rivera** (1717-1789) was born in Spain and naturalized in New York (1746) before moving to Newport. He was a merchant, shipper and considered a pioneer in the production of spermaceti candles. Rivera's partnerships included Christian merchants as well as Aaron Lopez, Newport's wealthiest merchant and his son-in-law. Rivera served as president of the Newport Jewish congregation.

The upright stone for **Rebecca Pollock** (1699c-1764) near the Rivera family is an example of a colonial stone with Hebrew writing.

