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ORANGE COUNTY MONUMENTS

NEWS RELEASE

Historic Revolutionary War-Era Cemetery in New Windsor Restored as Congregation Prepares to Close Doors

Orange County Monuments Completes Top-to-Bottom Restoration of Vails Gate Cemetery, Preserving More Than Two Centuries of Orange County History

NEW WINDSOR, N.Y. — November 20, 2026 — Before closing its doors and consolidating with another congregation, the historic Vail's Gate United Methodist Church has completed a final act of stewardship for the community: commissioning a comprehensive restoration of every monument in the adjacent Vails Gate Cemetery, where more than 300 early residents are laid to rest. The oldest headstones date back to Thomas Jefferson's presidency.

The restoration, performed by Orange County Monuments, encompassed every marker in the historic churchyard—stabilizing, cleaning, and revitalizing centuries-old stones to preserve the resting place of generations of Orange County families before the church property is sold or leased.

"When a historic congregation makes the difficult decision to close its building, the long-term care of its churchyard is often a major concern," said Anthony Minozzi, COO at the Travis Monument Group, parent company of Orange County Monuments. "The congregation wanted to ensure that the history resting on these grounds wasn't left behind. Restoring every single monument in Vails Gate Cemetery completely transformed the site and honors the families who built this community more than two centuries ago."

"This cemetery holds the story of our congregation and our town from its earliest days," said Ken Pick, board member of Vail's Gate United Methodist Church. "As we prepare to move to a new chapter, ensuring these sacred grounds were restored and protected was our highest priority."

More Than Two Centuries of Hudson Valley Heritage

The Vail's Gate United Methodist Church and its adjoining graveyard carry deep roots in American and Orange County history:

- **Revolutionary War Origins:** Originally organized as the New Windsor Methodist Church, the congregation began with class meetings held in the home of John Ellison—a landmark now preserved as **Knox's Headquarters State Historic Site**, located at the corner of Route 94 and Old Forge Road in New Windsor.

- **First in Orange County:** In 1807, the sanctuary was built on land donated by Ellison and incorporated that same year as the Union Methodist Church, making it Orange County's first Methodist church building. In 2014, the sanctuary was officially placed on the United Methodist Historic Registry.

- **Generations of Local History:** Established just after the sanctuary was built in 1807, the cemetery's earliest recorded burials—David Jennings, Hannah Woodruff, and Elizabeth Cooper—date to that founding year. Historical records compiled by Town of New Windsor Historian Glenn Marshall document just over 300 burials spanning nearly 150 years, including descendants of early circuit rider Samuel Fowler (who helped establish Trinity United Methodist Church in Newburgh in 1820) and later burials such as Sarah T. Courtney in 1916 and Edmond Rich Morton in 1951.

Reversing Decades of Weathering

The preservation effort brings a dramatic turnaround to a site whose deterioration was documented nearly a century ago. Following a 1927 headstone survey by the Quassaic Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, historian Gertrude A. Barber conducted a second survey in 1930 and noted in her report that the cemetery was "in very bad condition."

Throughout the recent project, craftsmen from Orange County Monuments meticulously repaired, leveled, and cleaned weathered and leaning monuments across the entire property—ensuring structural stability and legibility for future generations.

High-resolution "before and after" photographs of the Vails Gate Cemetery restoration are available upon request.

About Orange County Monuments / Travis Monument Group

Serving Orange County families since 2005, Orange County Monuments is a full-service memorial company based in Washingtonville, New York. As a member of the family-owned and operated Travis Monument Group—which brings more than eight generations of stone-carving heritage and has served the Tri-State area since 1899—the company specializes in custom granite and bronze memorials, private mausoleums, on-site inscriptions, and historic monument cleaning and restoration.

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