



Published: October 29, 2008 12:34 pm

Preservation group, inmates helping to clean Bradford cemetery

By **Joni Quinn**
jquinn@haverhillgazette.com

A few months ago, anyone who visited the Old Bradford Burial Ground, looking for a relative buried, would have found it nearly impossible to find the headstone.

Over half the cemetery was overrun with vines and weeds, especially poison ivy. Headstones were damaged or blocked by fallen tree limbs.

Today, more than three-quarters of the land is easily accessible and weed-free, thanks to the support and effort of Tom Spitalere and his nonprofit Pentucket Restoration and Preservation Group, the city of Haverhill, and groups from the Corrections Department working under Peter Boisselle, a foreman with the Highway Department.

Barron Tenney of Haverhill is especially thankful to all those who helped clean the burial ground, which is the final resting place of Thomas Tenney, a member of the well-known Tenney family.

"Tom only has a few people in his group, but they are so devoted, and thanks to them and everyone else, we've gotten a lot done," Tenney said.

Tenney said that Boisselle, who supervises the groups from the Office of Community Corrections and Alternative Corrections, has been a great help. The crews are composed of inmates of area county jails.

"The crews have done an amazing job. You wouldn't even recognize this place if you saw it a little while ago. The mayor and his aide, Andrew, arranged for them to be here to help and they have tremendously," he said.

Now that most of the cemetery is clean, Tenney said, the mayor will be able to find a way to help maintain it through the DPW as well as Spitalere's nonprofit group.

Boisselle said the project has been great for the corrections groups and hopes to return to the grounds soon to help with the upkeep.

One of the next big projects the Pentucket Preservation and Restoration Group must tackle is the large trees and stumps that have damaged some of the headstones. In some cases, the trees have actually grown on top and around the headstones.

So far, Thomas Tenney's grave has not been located, but Barron has found Thomas's son, John Tenney.

Thomas Tenney came to Haverhill in 1675 from Rowley and was among the many early settlers of Bradford. He served in the Colonial militia and fought in King Philip's War.

The search for Thomas Tenney's grave site added a sense of urgency to the cleanup of the burial ground. Family members are hoping to have their annual family reunion in August 2009 at the Bradford Burial Ground.

The site is also the final resting place of other Tenney family members, including Charles Tenney, who built Methuen's Tenney Castle; and Mary Jane Tenney, who died in Haverhill. The Haverhill Historical Society named the main hall in the Buttonwoods Museum after her.

To volunteer to help with the cemetery project, contact Spitalere at 978-376-2807.

Photos



Cemetery preservationists have found gravestones such as this one in the Old Bradford Burial Ground that are being hidden by trees growing right around and over them. **Joni Quinn/Staff photo** (Click for larger image)

More from the Archives section

Most Discussed

[Can you identify this photo?](#)
4 comments · 1 day ago

[NO DEAL: Cemetery volunteer rejects mayor's proposal](#)
9 comments · 1 day ago

[Teen caretaker kicked out of Hilldale cemetery](#)
5 comments · 2 weeks ago

[Hilldale Cemetery dispute reaches stalemate](#)
1 comment · 2 days ago

[McDonald's partners with Bradford school to celebrate restaurant re-opening](#)
1 comment · 2 days ago