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Continuing the Tradition ~ Preserving Our History

bvhsri.org ♦ 1873 Old Louisquissett Pike (Rte 246) ♦ PO Box 125, Lincoln RI, 02865

Central Falls ♦ Cumberland ♦ Lincoln ♦ North Smithfield ♦ Pawtucket ♦ Woonsocket

LIVE AND IN PERSON MARCH 30TH AT 7P.M. AT NORTH GATE!

My Oh My Oh **Ken Postle!!!**

*"He's more gravedigger than gentleman farmer."
-Susan Clarke*



Ken Postle is intense. Let me rephrase that; you haven't met intense until you've met Ken Postle. I decided one of the best ways to convey his enthusiasm would be to check out his frequent Facebook posts throughout February and offer you some highlights. His posts are tireless, inspirational, beautiful and emotional.

Let's start with this - If you're an avid reader of The Valley Breeze, you might find the name Ken Postle slightly familiar. It's because he's been part of a news story in the periodical 5 different times in February. (Maybe more?) He was involved in coverage concerning the Lincoln Conservation Commission, as well as the Lincoln Town Council's, work in regard to cemetery restoration and preservation. Ken, along with BVHS Vice President John Houghton, stood before the Commission and was awarded 600 dollars for restoration work. From there, the Town Council voted to enact stricter legislation on construction near cemeteries, hopefully ensuring their protection.

He was instrumental in Pawtucket removing debris that had been allowed to pile up on gravesites behind the public works building. This was a problem that government officials had promised a resolution to years ago. Ken refused it to be swept under the rug. Finally, he was interviewed about the terrible condition of historic cemeteries in North Providence.

One theme runs through all these news stories: cemeteries. Ken Postle is enthusiastically working to uncover, preserve and restore historic cemeteries through the Blackstone Valley; right now he's focused in Lincoln and North Providence. His Facebook group, River Road, Blackstone River and Canal Cemeteries, shows just how committed he is; and how nothing stands in the way of Ken Postle. On February 6th, for instance, traveling in his wife's car, he breaks down with a dead battery. Now for me, after waiting in the cold for a jump, I would have called it a day and gone home to some junk TV and high calorie food. Ken Postle, however, made the rounds in Pawtucket, checking up on cemeteries and seeing if progress had been made on the aforementioned debris removal.

After discovering a cemetery in North Providence, Ken pulled out a banner day on February 20th. He spent the morning answering e-mails about gravesites and met with the Town Historian, Tom Greene. After that, he shot over to the Sons of the American Revolution Banquet where he was awarded the bronze medal for local preservation efforts. Again, for me, this is a pretty good day, and after the free meal from the S.A.R., I would have gone home and spent the night finding the perfect spot for my medal. Ken Postle pulled on his boots (or maybe he was already wearing them) and spent the rest of the day (right up until dark) cleaning up the newly found plots at NP4, or Sunset Cemetery.

He gets his new phone activated on the 21st and instead of calling his friends and installing apps, Ken drives out and tests the camera under the full moon at Sunset Cemetery. This is the type of person Ken Postle is; relentless and incredible. Keep in mind, this is his "side job". This is his unpaid weekend hobby. Ken works fulltime during the week. He has a lovely wife, 4 amazing children and 2 precious grandkids. His passion for cemetery restoration is exemplified by how critical it is to him that he still fit it into his already busy life.

-KEN POSTLE, CONTINUED



He has uncovered more than 3000 memorials, most of them Vets and their families. He has obstacles. He has to listen to critics and naysayers who come out and sneer at what he does. People sometimes can't help but try and get others down by telling them their work is futile. They try to dishearten you by reminding you of how big the task at hand is. Ken's heart is too strong to be conquered. He is reminded of the grace behind his work when a family gets connected to their ancestors. His work isn't futile when he sees that spark in other volunteers. It comes in that moment when they uncover something broken and are able to see it fixed.

What does Ken want out of 2016? "I want to continue recovering the fragile and missing in our local connecting communities, while empowering the neighbors of the yards to restore and preserve what we have found-the more civic and school groups we can encourage and involve the better. In Pawtucket, our work efforts led to local school kids doing essay contests, flaggings and parades to honor our fallen and living veterans-I would like to see similar efforts start in Lincoln, Cumberland and North Providence. As always, the work goes on one stone and yard at a time-we can't get discouraged by the enormity of the missing and neglected, instead we need take advantage of every opportunity to raise awareness and awaken folk to the buried treasures in their midst..." Let's help him succeed. Donations can be made to BVHS on Ken's behalf. Attend our lecture on March 30th at 7 P.M. to meet Ken yourself.

This Capital Campaign will fund much needed work and allow for continued upkeep of The Lonsdale Arnold Bakery, The Fire and the exterior and interior spaces at North Gate.

Help us meet our goal!

2015 - 2016 Capital Campaign



Blackstone's Itinerant Bones—(A continuation our January Article by Patrick Burke)

Nowadays, Study Hill – northeast of the river – would be in Cumberland's Lonsdale village. When Blackstone settled, the river was the Plymouth colony's western boundary. Through colonial land grabs and redrawn settlements, the area switched hands several times, but ultimately ended up part of RI in 1741. During the 1880's, the Lonsdale Company planned to level Study Hill for the new Ann & Hope Mill. In 1886, Blackstone's grave was disinterred, and the bone fragments and ancient nails were boxed and entrusted to superintendent G.W. Pratt to place under a future monument. In 1889, a 12-foot, granite obelisk went up, dedicated by Blackstone's descendants and inscribed by a member of the Lonsdale Company. According to the monument, Blackstone's remains were placed underneath. The monument stood on company grounds as the mill went into disrepair.



In letters kept by the Blackstone Valley Historical Society, the late John H. Meharg of Cumberland wrote to David Balfour of the Cumberland Historic District Commission that the monument was in "deplorable condition" in 1943. The mill became a Naval repair depot, and Meharg was worried about the monument becoming further damaged. After "agreeable negotiations" with the Navy, Meharg arranged for the monument's move to Broad Street in Cumberland, onto the property of an old First Presbyterian Church.

"I do not know whether Blackstone's remains were removed at the same time. Neither do I know if they were buried near or under the monument when it was erected in the mill yard. The minutes of the Lonsdale Company do not seem to be clear on this point," Meharg wrote.

In 1996, Blackstone's monument was moved to the corner of Broad and Blackstone Streets, as the centerpiece of the new Blackstone Memorial Park, where it stands today. Longtime Woonsocket Call reporter Louise Lind (who passed away in 2007) wrote a comprehensive monograph on this early atavist titled "William Blackstone: Sage Of The Wilderness." In her research during the early 1990s, Lind spoke with a Robert E. Furey, son of mill engineer James Furey. The elder Furey worked at Anne & Hope from the war days until the department store transformation. Robert claimed the remains had been dug up after WWII during renovation and had sat in a lead box in an old office.

"My mother and I wanted my father to offer the box to the Rhode Island Historical Society or someone like that, but he didn't get around to it," the younger Furey told Lind. The elder Furey passed away in 1965 and his son died in 1992. Blackstone's mystery continues to linger. Singular in life, this individual settler's unusual legacy continues stretching into folklore.

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