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Continuing the Tradition ~ Preserving Our History

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BVHS Open for Great Road Day Sept 26 BVHS Showcases Graveyard Restoration Projects

On Great Road Day, Saturday, September 26, 2020, BVHS will be open for the first time since January. From 11:00 am to 4:00 pm, Northgate and the Arnold's Original Lonsdale Bakery will be open for visitors. A folk art dollhouse made by Claire Boutiette from Manville will also be on display. We ask all our visitors to wear masks.

For our exhibit on Great Road Day, BVHS will be showcasing the cemetery restoration work undertaken this past year by Greg Duhamel and Ken Postle, with photographs from the Facebook group, "River Road and Blackstone River Valley Cemeteries." We appreciate their hours of volunteer work preserving and discovering Blackstone Valley history.

Greg Duhamel and Johnelle Bergeron and their volunteers were able to continue their amazing work early this spring on Woonsocket 9, the Bernon/St. James cemetery in Woonsocket, but had to put it on hold because of COVID-19. They are cur-



Gravestone of Edwin Cook who died at age 1 (1830-1831), from the Zebina Cook Lot, in the cemetery designated Woonsocket 13.



Johnelle Bergeron cleans a gravestone.

rently doing work at three cemeteries in Woonsocket, the Zebina Cook Cemetery (Woonsocket 13) on Elder Ballou Road, the Cook Cemetery on Mendon Road and Cumberland Hill Road (Woonsocket 1), and the Lt. Charles Capron Cemetery on Cumberland Hill Road (Woonsocket 2). Ken Postle has been working in a few locations recently, including Lincoln 14, the Harris lot off Sherman Avenue by Route 146, and NP 14, the Rhodes Lot near



A volunteer poses with the gravestone of Lydia Harris in the cemetery called Lincoln 14.

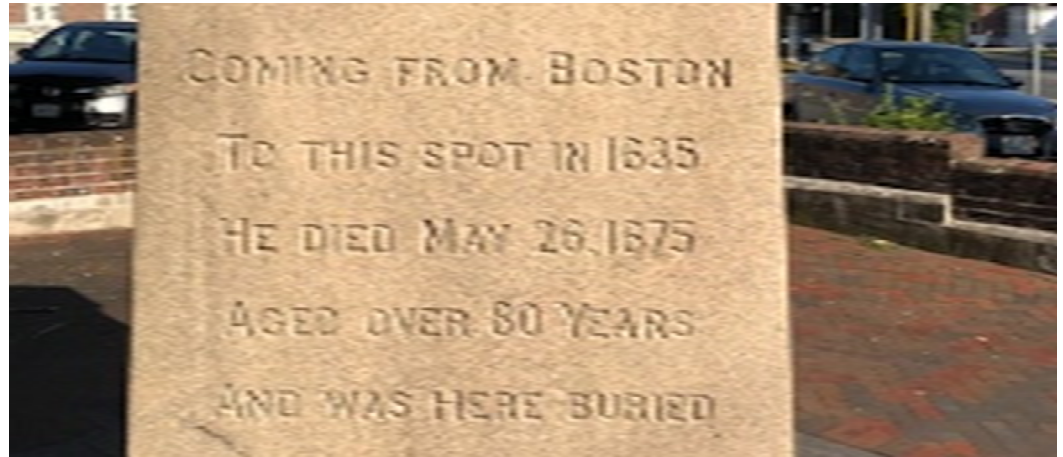
Douglas Pike in North Providence.

This exhibit takes place in part thanks to the support of the R.I. Council for the Humanities.



Volunteers uncover fieldstone headstones in the lot called Lincoln 14, off Sherman Avenue.

What happened to William Blackstone's Body?



Here buried? Not so. Blackstone's monument is located at William Blackstone Memorial Park on Broad and Blackstone streets in Cumberland.

In talking about the contributions of the Blackstone Valley to the Second World War, we would be remiss to overlook those of the Valley's namesake, William Blackstone himself. Now this might seem a bit peculiar, seeing as he died over 250 years before the war started, but like many an unsung hero, the Reverend Blackstone literally gave all he had to the war effort. Today you can visit the William Blackstone Memorial Park in Cumberland to visit a monument that reads in part "here lies the Reverend William Blackstone," but the stone itself is lying. Because William Blackstone isn't under there and truth be told no one knows where he is.

William Blackstone, the first English settler of the Blackstone Valley came to this area in 1635 after leaving Boston. What is now the village of Lonsdale in Cumberland was then a wilderness that he named Study Hill. Blackstone lived there, farming and preaching, until his death in 1675 at

which point, he was buried in a pastoral grove along the river that now bears his name. And there he remained quite peacefully for over 200 years.

Then in 1886, the Lonsdale Company decided to expand their textile empire by building a new mill on the site, the Ann & Hope. The Ann & Hope mill was to be the Lonsdale Company's new flagship, a massive 4-story mill running almost 500 feet. This meant flattening out the base of Study Hill, including the site of William Blackstone's grave, to provide a level base for the mill.

Before this was done the people of Cumberland carefully disinterred Reverend Blackstone. His meager remains were lovingly placed in a new coffin and set aside. Following the demolition of Study Hill and the building of Ann & Hope, William was once again laid to rest in 1889. This time with much fanfare and a new monument was placed to mark the site, now in the mill yard in

This story was presented by National Parks Ranger Kevin Klyberg of the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park on July 7.

You can also watch Klyberg deliver it as "Ranger Chat 12: What Happened to Blackstone's Body?" on

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z0LD8SNuFE8>

front of Ann & Hope.

Blackstone's final slumber was disturbed again less than sixty years later. In 1944 during the midst of the war, the Ann & Hope mill was being used by the Navy as a repair depot for heavy equipment. They needed a new rail line to bring items up from the docks at Providence and Quonset Point. This new rail line would be built right through the mill yard, right over the site of William Blackstone's grave.

At this point wiser minds determined that perhaps this was not the best spot for Blackstone

to be, seeing as it seemed to be a high traffic area. The monument was ordered to be moved to a new site, behind the mill along Broad Street. In this way, the monument would both be out of the way and also more visible. Now here, as so often in the life of William Blackstone, the story becomes confused. Some say that the small coffin containing Blackstone's remains were dug up at the same time. Another story claims that he remained at rest until just after the war, when a backhoe unearthed them during another construction project. Either way, Blackstone's remains were put aside for future reburial at a suitable time. A few years later when the time came to rebury the good Reverend, there was a problem. The box was gone. Now some accounts say it was last seen on a shelf in a storeroom behind the manager's office at Ann & Hope. Another story tells of it being kept in somebody's barn. But either way the earthly remains of William Blackstone were gone. *(Continued on p. 4)*

Looking forward to fall at Northgate...

Most events are free.
Everyone is welcome.
Donations are gratefully accepted.

We are not holding talks at Northgate this fall in an effort to keep our members and visitors safe. We plan to hold two or three exhibits that guests can walk through and enjoy. We ask that all guests wear masks.

11:00-4:00 pm, Saturday, September 26: Great Road Open House Day. Northgate will have an exhibit on the work of Greg Duhamel and Ken Postle this year, as they continue their efforts to restore lost and battered graveyards, honor veterans of past wars, and contribute to local historical and genealogical knowledge.

2:00-4:00 pm, Saturday, October 24: Local Dairies: History in Milk Bottles. Danny Bethel will hold an exhibit of his collection of vintage milk bottles from local dairies.



Kevin Heskin, Elizabeth Gammage, and Daniel Wall take a break from cleaning up the dead and damaged trees at BVHS
Photo by Jason Dionne, April 2, 2020

Tree Cleanup

On April 2, Kevin Heskin, Elizabeth Gammage, Daniel Wall, and Jason Dionne worked hard to cut down and clean up the dead and damaged trees at BVHS. Danny Bethel helped cut up some of the tree that had come down during a storm last year and nearly hit the bakery. Thanks to all!

BVHS receives Grant from RI Council of the Humanities

BVHS received a \$2,000 COVID-19 Relief Grant from the RI Council of the Humanities for small organizations. This year we have lost most of our revenue with the loss of the church and other event rentals. One church has begun meeting again, but they are renting only half time. The Board worked hard on the grant application. Special thanks to BVHS Treasurer John Houghton.

Arnold House

1930s. He was her father-in-law's father. The picture is dated March 17, 1935. She thought that the picture might be of the Israel Arnold house, and wondered about the difference in roof lines.

We think that it may be a picture of the Samuel Arnold House at 500 Great Road, near the entrance to Lincoln Woods. The main house appears identical, but the ell has gained another story and a garage has been added. The house can be seen on Zillow and YouTube. What do you think?



Markuson Drawing of "Arnold House, Lincoln, RI"

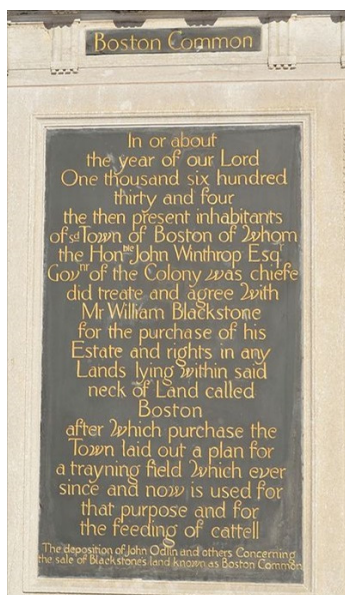
This summer Nancy Markuson wrote to BVHS, and sent this photograph of a drawing of the "Arnold

House." The drawing was made by Miner John Markuson, who was an architect and professor at UMass Amherst in the 1920s to

Special thanks

Special thanks are also due to Greg Duhamel who hosted a birthday fundraiser on Facebook for BVHS. We are very grateful.

Where is Blackstone's Body? cont.



Plaque at Boston Common
Photo from Wikipedia

Visit the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park's YouTube Channel for more Ranger Chats.

(Continued from p.2) And thus, William Blackstone became yet another unwitting sacrifice to the giant war effort.

The mystery remains unsolved to this day. And when this new park was created in 1997, the monument was moved a second time – and continues to announce falsely that this is the final resting-place of the Reverend William Blackstone: pioneer, preacher, botanist and MIA since 1944.

William Blackstone was the first colonist to settle in what is now Boston, living alone. The Puritans settled in nearby Charlestown in 1629, but had trouble finding drinkable water, so he invited them to move to his land in 1630. They granted him 50 acres, but he sold it back to them in 1634 and went to Rhode Island, and this land is now Boston Common.

Don't forget to renew your membership! Donations are always welcome to help keep up North Gate, the Fire Station and the Bakery! www.bvhsri.org/join



Gloria Turner, Esther Wilbur, Hope Boott, and Ida McDermott at a BVHS event on October 8, 2006.

In Memoriam: Ida McDermott



Ida McDermott

Ida McDermott died on June 23, 2020. She was the wife of the late Joseph E. McDermott. She was born in Lincoln where she

was a lifelong resident, a daughter of the late Lester and Mary (Riley) Anderson. She had been employed as a secretary for J. H. Lynch for over 22 years.

Ida was a member of the Blackstone Valley Historical Society and was one of the most active members, serving on the hospitality committee, helping out on Great Road Day and participating in many events. We will all miss her!

She is survived by a son, Robert McDermott, a daughter, Karen Roderick, a sister, May Rancourt, four grandchildren, and many nieces and nephews.

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