



# THE LANDMARK

PUBLICATION OF THE BLACKSTONE VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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*Continuing the Tradition ~ Preserving Our History*

[bvhsri.org](http://bvhsri.org) • 1873 Old Louisquisset Pike (Rte 246) • PO Box 125, Lincoln RI, 02865

## Come to our Annual Meeting on June 27

### Postle to give Nowak Lecture; Board seeks new members

The BVHS Annual Meeting and Election will take place at 1:30 pm June 27 at North Gate on Louisquisset Pike, where board members will be elected and reports will be presented. It will be an in-person meeting after this long year of Covid-19. We invite you to join the meeting and attend the annual Christine Nowak Lecture that follows.

This year the lecture will be presented by Ken Postle, whose efforts to

preserve Blackstone Valley history through conservation of its historic cemeteries have often been chronicled in this newsletter. We hope you are all well and looking forward to the coming year of events. As always, your suggestions and participation are welcome.

The Nominating Committee for the BVHS, Robert Ferri, Richard Walker, Kevin Heskin and Kevin Bedford, led by Chairman Donald Coelho, announces that the slate of officers/

#### Annual Meeting

1:30 pm June 27 BVHS

2:00 pm Christine Nowak  
Lecture

nominees for 2021-2022 remains the same:

Jason Dionne: President  
Lori Melucci: Vice President  
Francine Jackson: Secretary  
John Houghton: Treasurer  
Members at large:  
Gail Harris  
Bob Ferri  
Don Coelho

If you are interested in joining the board, which

organizes history-related activities, lectures, and exhibits, cares for the facility of North Gate and its artifacts and collections, and works to build awareness and community around the historical origins of the Blackstone Valley, please contact Donald Coelho at [don.coelho@crbard.com](mailto:don.coelho@crbard.com).

Nominations also will be taken from the floor during the annual meeting, which begins at 1:30 pm. We hope to see you there.

## Collapsing Historic Cemetery Wall Saved by Volunteers

More than a year ago, Lincoln resident William (Bill) Gagne and his sister, Kristin Gilbert, asked for help to repair the retaining wall built by their grandfather, William Gagne, to protect an historic cemetery on the edge of their property on Great Road.

Their grandfather built the wall by hand, coming home on his lunch breaks to work on it, and only World War II temporarily

halted the construction. The family cared for the cemetery for many years, but the wall collapsed early last year.

This month, the wall finally was repaired. John Houghton from BVHS worked to secure materials, a contractor, and additional funding with the support of the Gagne family and Ken Postle. The Lincoln Conservation Commission donated

*(Continued on p. 2)*



The cemetery retaining wall is completed.



The Paramount sign today.

## Paramount Lost: One Year Later



Paramount in its heyday. Photo courtesy of the Pawtucket Public Library.

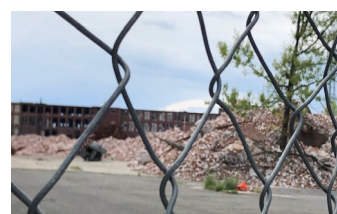
*By Francine Jackson*

It's hard to believe that the historic brick mill complex on Pine Street in Pawtucket, occupied by the beloved greeting card company Paramount Line, Inc. for more than 50 years until 2006, was destroyed by fire one year ago. Coincidentally, that fire occurred on one of the last days we were allowed outside with others, just be-

fore the pandemic cloistered the world's population.

Just about all that was left standing was the tower, reminding us of its construction in 1875; six months later, we drove by the remains, only to see that the tower also had fallen. Was it from natural causes, or did the presence of nearby construction equipment nudge it from its stately stance? A year has gone by, and the entire set of buildings that were destroyed are now just loose bricks, piled several feet high. The once beautiful structures are piecemeal, just lumps of deserted building material. In addition, within several piles of bricks are beams, now burnt, but still show-

ing how sturdy the Paramount building once was. Now, however, the only reminder of the once second-largest greeting card company in the world is the sign that once graced the driveway, inviting its owners and workers to enter. Once that sign is either felled or drops from age, any reminders of what that part of the city had: A place that made materials to make people all over the world happy – greeting cards – will be gone. A very sad legacy to what once was.



Loose bricks fallen from demolition of Paramount building.



The headstone of Anna Sanderson, who died in 1807.

## Collapsing Historic Cemetery Wall, continued

*(Continued from p. 1)*

Funds, Smithfield Peat donated the stones for the wall, and JDI Construction loaned a cement mixer. Steve Smith from Steve Smith Masonry donated the labor and the use of other necessary equipment, and reconstructed the wall with the help of volunteers, including homeowner Bill Gagne.

This was a Harris family cemetery, according to Ken Postle. There are

only a few headstones visible in the small cemetery, but they include that of Levina Thomas, who died in 1812 in childbirth. Documents indicate that there were once nine to 12 stones in this lot. Another headstone commemorates Anna Sanderson, who died in 1807 at Smithfield. She was 27 years old.

Ken and another volunteer discovered a broken stone that had been swallowed by tree roots in this

cemetery a few years ago, so there may be more stones buried, although some of the graves may have been moved. For more of this story, see the Valley Breeze: <https://www.valleybreeze.com/2021-05-12/cumberland-lincoln-area/volunteers-collaborate-restore-historic-cemetery-wall-lincoln#.YKqghahKiM8>



# Volunteers Honor Veterans' Graves in Pawtucket



Ken Postle speaks to volunteers at the Mineral Spring Avenue Cemetery on May 8.



Scouts at St. Francis Cemetery, May 22.

Ken Postle, cemetery coordinator for the BVHS, is leading volunteers in an effort to honor veterans' graves by placing fresh flags on their stones. On the three Saturdays so far this month, Postle and his team of scout troops and other community volunteers have flagged hundreds of graves at Oak Grove Cemetery, Mineral Spring Avenue Cemetery, and St. Francis Cemetery. According to Postle, eight volunteers helped at Oak Grove, 46 volunteers worked at Mineral Spring and 36 more at St. Francis.

If you'd like to participate, volunteers will be gathering once again on Saturday May 29 to honor more veterans' gravesites with flags. For details, please check the Facebook page at:

[https://www.facebook.com/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1664974860414600/?fref=nf)

[groups/1664974860414600/?fref=nf](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1664974860414600/?fref=nf).

On Facebook, Postle shared how he began his restoration efforts.

"I know many of you see, follow and support our restoration efforts," he wrote. "Few of you know how the Cemetery Pastor got his start. I was cubmaster of Pack 1 Pawtucket. I wanted our kids to appreciate the cost of our freedoms. I asked about flagging efforts in the local area. A Korean War Veteran living in Pawtucket named Moe Trotter came out in the pouring rain and patiently worked with our kids. When I apologized for the weather conditions, he chuckled and told us, 'Veterans have served in far worse conditions.'

"What we found at MSA (Mineral Spring Avenue) Cemetery was heartbreak-

ing," he recounted. "The front flag was tattered. The graves were mowed underground and/or toppled. A few of the Revolutionary War and a lot of the Civil War Vets' (graves) were missing. We vowed to make a difference."

Postle wrote about the work done on May 22 on a recent post. He said that most efforts were concentrated on St. Francis Cemetery. In addition, the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) held a special ceremony at the grave of the nurse Henrietta Drummond, Pawtucket's WWI heroine.

"Amazing day with both Troops 28 Pawtucket, boys and girls, BVHS volunteers, DAR volunteers, Troup 64 reps, and Friends of the Vets who in the space of 2.5 hours of trudging up and down hills put out 7 ¾ cases of flags,"

Postle wrote. "Each case has 144 flags. We came very close to total coverage. It was an awesome effort, folks! Special thanks to the leaders of both troops." Volunteers included Ellen Finnerty, Nicole Loranger, Michael Mattaliano Dussault (who led one group), Tom Crowley, Karen and Tyler Longest, Mindy and Marien Theroux, and Andrew, Kelly, Liam and Winston Domenico. Over 36 volunteers signed in.

See also the Pawtucket Valley Breeze on the May 8 flagging at Mineral Spring Avenue Cemetery:

[http://valleybreeze.uberflip.com/i/1370836-the-valley-breeze-pawtucket-05-12-2021/0?fbclid=IwAR1SF6rALzTG\\_COhQ9f6sz0I4IT9L1YP6rWReH0a3arXOYVxExb5OliXfgs](http://valleybreeze.uberflip.com/i/1370836-the-valley-breeze-pawtucket-05-12-2021/0?fbclid=IwAR1SF6rALzTG_COhQ9f6sz0I4IT9L1YP6rWReH0a3arXOYVxExb5OliXfgs)

# Upcoming Events

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

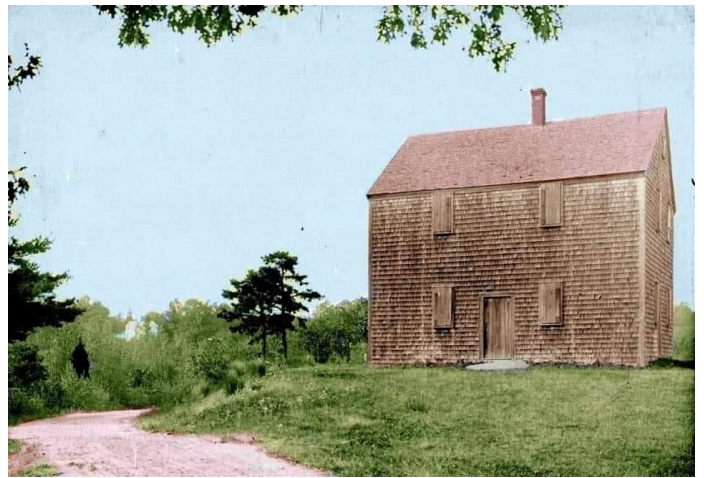
**Sunday, June 27:** The BVHS Annual Meeting will take place at 1:30 pm, followed by the Christine Nowak Lecture, which will be given by the Ken Postle.

## Beautifully Hand-Colorized Historic Photos Offer Views of Cumberland's Past

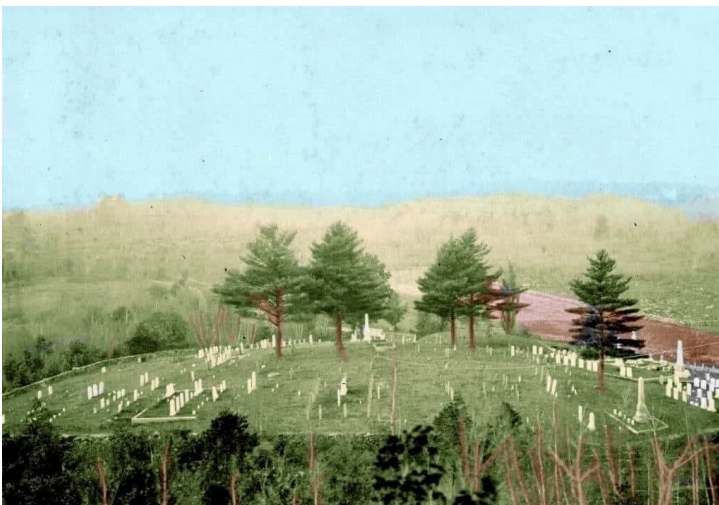
Four years ago, BVHS was given an unusual album of vintage photographs of houses owned by the Ballou family as well as significant places around Cumberland. Richard Robeau of Woonsocket colorized some of the photographs for Greg Duhamel, and they appeared on Facebook about a year and a half ago. The colorized photographs were so beautiful that we asked if we could put them in the newsletter. The photographs also can be found on the BVHS website in the original black and white.



Ballou Cemetery ca. 1900-1910.



Elder Ballou Meeting House.



Ballou Cemetery from Iron Mine Hill.

### BVHS Executive Board

President: Jason Dionne

**401-862-4202**

Email: [jjhdio70@gmail.com](mailto:jjhdio70@gmail.com)

Vice President: Lori Melucci

Secretary: Francine Jackson

Treasurer/Property Manager:  
John Houghton

### Members-at-Large

Gail Harris, Bob Ferri, Don Coelho



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