

Cemetery Benefits from Volunteers Who Never Met

By Bill Poray, Perinton Town Historian

The efforts of two volunteers, twenty-six years apart, are helping to restore gravestones at a cemetery in Bushnell's Basin. The first volunteer, former Fairport High School student Graham Brooks, led a team that inventoried and photographed the gravestones at the cemetery in 1993. The result of Graham's Eagle Scout project resides in Perinton's town archives. It is a large three-ring binder filled with detailed records of burials at the cemetery, the only such record in existence.



Perinton Town Supervisor Ciaran Hanna and Tim Romeo inspect a gravestone at the Bushnell's Basin Cemetery.

I found Graham Brooks, now living in Massachusetts, and asked about his Eagle Scout project of 1993. "It was a great mix of the past and present. We spent time getting to know each stone, figuring out where they belonged, and what was said on each," said the class of 1994 FHS graduate. Graham's team also trimmed trees and bushes, and cleared away debris.

The second volunteer is Tim Romeo, who has taken it upon himself to repair, rebuild, and clean gravestones at the cemetery, once tucked behind the long demolished Bushnell's Basin School No. 1, not far from the foot of Garnsey Road on Route 96. Like many others, there is much work to do at the Bushnell's Basin cemetery, which has long been in a state of dormancy. Graves include those of Revolutionary War soldier Amos Woodin (1753-1842), and many veterans of the Civil War. There has not been a burial here in decades, and like a few other such cemeteries in Perinton, responsibility for its upkeep lies with the town.

Cemeteries in Pittsford have benefitted from Tim Romeo's passion for some time. He transports his tools, even buckets of water, in his car, as often no water is available on site. In some cases, cleaning is all that is required. Other gravestones need more help. Some are broken into several pieces, and over time, the headstone and footstone upon which it rests have become separated. When that is the case, the 1993 inventory by Graham Brooks and his team can be a valuable resource. Some gravestones that are now fallen and broken were in one piece in 1993. Graham's documentation and photos combined with Tim's restorations are helping to preserve our history for future generations.



In this circa 1940s image, the cemetery at Bushnell's Basin is visible just behind the District 1 School. The building was demolished in 1978, after heavy snows collapsed the roof.



Children in front of a wire fence separating the District 1 schoolyard from the cemetery at Bushnell's Basin, circa 1940s.

Although Graham has never met Tim, he said he was gratified to learn that his Boy Scout project "is providing value twenty-six years later, as another volunteer continues the work on the cemetery." The efforts of Graham Brooks and Tim Romeo are restoring some peace and dignity to those who lived and died in this town so long ago.

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