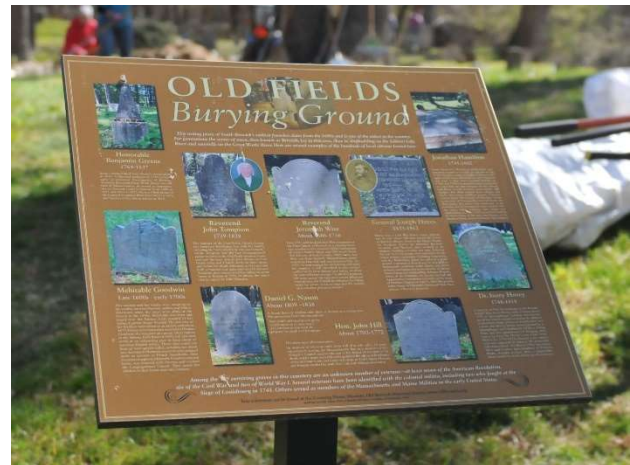


April 29, 2024: Organized by VFW – Post 5744, members gathered with Liberty Torchbearers and neighborhood volunteers to clean the Old Fields Burying Grounds, located on Vine Street in South Berwick. This project, supported by the Town of South Berwick, included the removal of downed trees, limbs and accumulations of leaves, pine needles, and pinecones to enable the town’s cemetery department to provide lawn maintenance.

Overlooking Leigh's Mill Pond, Old Fields Burying Ground is one of the oldest cemeteries in the United States, dating from the 1600s. It was the main burial place of the town's first European settlers – families such as those of Thomas Spencer (c. 1596-1681), William Chadbourne (1562-1682), and Humphrey Chadbourne (1615-1667).



Hundreds of citizens are buried in Old Fields Burying Ground, many in graves no longer visible or where only fragments of headstones remain. Earliest markers may have been plain fieldstones.

Among some 339 identified surviving graves in the

cemetery are an unknown number of former soldiers' graves from the 1700s to the 1900s. Of the identified veterans, seven are of the American Revolution, six of the Civil War, two of World War I. Several others have been tied to the colonial militia, including two who fought at the Siege of Louisburg in 1745, and others who served as members of the Massachusetts and Maine Militias.⁽¹⁾



Commander Jeff Chase hauled in his front-end loader (tractor), which proved invaluable for hauling out logs, branches, tangles of vines, and large bags of leaves, pine needles and pinecones.

Dawn Chase provided expert control of the tractor, maneuvering around the multitude of stone projections throughout the cemetery.



A four-wheeler with attached trailer provided for easier transport of gathered materials from the cemetery; these were piled near the access road, where they would later be picked up by town employees.

Overall, it was a great day to be outdoors, doing a good thing for the community.



VFWs Dan Kenney





Facing: VFW's John Ford and Jeff Chase



VFW's Marc Scheele



VFW's Mike Murray



VFW's Mike St. Pierre

Here is what we left for the Town of South Berwick to pick up; the town reportedly completed this the very next day!



Jumble of Tangled Vines



Lots of Leaves, Pine Needles, Pinecones, Branches and Sections of logs

Liberty Torchbearers⁽²⁾: Each year, thousands of Liberty Mutual employees give, volunteer, and serve in support of the causes they care about, with “Serve with Liberty” being Liberty’s annual days of service. The group participating in this project desired to work with a veteran’s organization.



Brian Poirier



Calvin Butler



Scott Cannon



Kristen McKenney



Lisa LaChance



Kris Burgess



John Holloway



Caroline Morrison

VFW – Post 5744, the Town of South Berwick, and the Berwick Historical Society sincerely appreciated this Serve with Liberty team’s unwavering support of this cemetery’s cleanup. Your team provided forty-man hours of generous community service to help preserve this 2.5-acre burial ground.

Neighborhood Volunteers:



Bill Straub, Rick Tindermann (not pictured), and Mary Jo Wentworth. (Mary Jo lives in Methuen, MA; she heard about the cleanup from the Old Berwick Historical Society – she came to clean up the grave sites of her ancestors.



Work Group – left to right: Mary Jo Wentworth, Mike Murray, Lisa LaChance, Cariline Morrison, Kris Burgess, John Halloway, Dawn Chase, Jeff Chase, Scott Cannon, Calvin Butler, Marc Scheele, John Ford, Bill Straub, Brian Poirier. Missing were Dan Kenney, Kristen McKenney, Colin Robb, Christopher Proulx, and Rick Tindermann. Photo by Mike St. Pierre, Post Historian

(1) Information from the Old Berwick Historical Society

(2) Information from Liberty Mutual's website.

Photos by Mike St. Pierre, Historian