

## EDITORIAL

# The volunteer spirit: A renewal would be nice

The gravestone of the man who petitioned the governor to incorporate the town of Bedford in 1750 -- John Goffe -- has lain broken on the ground for two decades. Last month, it was professionally restored -- not at taxpayer expense, but through the effort of local volunteers who wish to preserve town history.

The members of the Friends of the Town of Bedford Cemeteries hope to restore all of the town's old, crumbling headstones. Aware of the state and local budget situations, they are raising private funds to pay for the effort.

This is the way historic preservation used to be done in towns and cities across New Hampshire and the nation. Now, the first place people often turn is to government. Politicians, happy to win a few more votes, often oblige, doling out taxpayer funds for projects that are worthwhile, but which could be financed privately if only people tried harder.

This goes for all sorts of efforts, not just historic preservation. Volunteers used to maintain public parks and cemeteries, staff public libraries and provide charitable services. Now taxpayers pay -- and pay a lot -- for those and other services.

We don't anticipate that these Bedford volunteers will spark a statewide renewal of volunteerism. But would it be so bad if they did?

Union Leader May 3, 2010