

PRESERVING BORO HISTORY



Ceil Pontecorvo pulls up vine growing on headstone at Moore-Jackson Cemetery in Woodside recently. The Colonial-era family burial ground — and resting place of some of the founding families of western Queens — recently got a cleanup. The site's owner, the Queens Historical Society, is seeking grants to fix up the neglected city landmark.



Cleanup at Woodside plot

BY NICHOLAS HIRSHON
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THEY DROVE fast, jumped turnstiles and were caught with drugs.

For penance, a crew of low-level criminals was recently dispatched to a small, weed-strewn plot in Woodside where discarded tires and furniture rest among the dead.

During the outing, organized by a nonprofit group, they spruced up historic Moore-Jackson Cemetery, where some of the families that founded western Queens are buried.

"It's worth preserving," said Manuel Larino, the Queens manager for NYC Community Cleanup.

Preservationists note there is much work ahead before the graveyard — which saw burials between 1733 and 1867 — can shed its eyesore label.

The property's owner, the Queens Historical Society, is seeking grants to rehabilitate the neglected city landmark.

But locals credit NYC Community Cleanup for helping give proper respect to the overlooked

patch on 54th St. between 31st and 32nd Aves.

"It's kind of discouraging at times, but we're trying to push on," said Arthur O'Meally, 76, of Flushing, who sits on the board at the Queens Historical Society and has led efforts to clean up the cemetery.

"We're trying to make the site something the community can be proud of."

Amid the trash on the property are markers honoring two notable Queens families: the Moores, whose ranks included prominent Loyalists during the Revolutionary War, and the Jacksons, for whom Jackson Heights is named.

So many bushes and weeds dot the cemetery, according to O'Meally, that they hid some of the weathered gravestones.

He compared the overgrowth to a jungle.

"You can hardly walk through it at times," O'Meally said.

Donors interested in aiding cleanup efforts can contact the historical society at (718) 939-0647, ext. 17.