The facelifting of the Bradford Burial Ground, Salem St., is nearing its completion by a staff of a dozen CETA employees.

Mrs. Ann Armstrong, who has been heading up the project since Aug. 21, said she is pleased with the progress since it accomplishes two objectives — clearing overgrowth and recording historical facts.

She said the only other historical record of the grounds, adjacent to the Bradford Swim Club, dates back to 1901 by the Essex Antiquarian, but those records eliminate an entire century since it only produced records of graves up to 18 00.

The Bradford site is only one of the projects, with a team of workers expected to start at the Pentucket Burial Ground, Water and Mill Sts., next week.

She said she is anxious to start work at Pentucket since cold weather is coming, but said "after all, the project had been scheduled to start the day after Memorial Day. It was delayed by red tape."

She thinks the Bradford work has reached the point where a six-man team can journey over to Pentucket by next week, "because now we're doing the nit-picky work here (Bradford) which is not nearly a as rewarding. But, it has to be done or else the brush will grow back."

One of the biggest phases of the projects is formulating the history of the cemetery, which in the case of Bradford's dates back to 168 1, the date that represents the oldest headstone in the cemetery.

Mrs. Armstrong, vice chairman of the Haverhill Historical Commission, (HHC) said the Bradford grounds comprise the site of the first two meeting houses, with the First Church of Christ, Bradford, being the fifth meeting house in Bradford's linear history.

The Bradford Burial Ground is the parish's burial ground, Mrs. Armstrong said.

Many of the notables buried there include names that are remembered as founders of Bradford College, then Bradford Academy which was the college founded by the religious parish.

Nathaniel Thurston, founding president of the academy's board of trustees, is one of those interred at the cemetery.

Others are: Jonathan Allen, John Peabody, Ezra Trask, Samuel Chadwich, Daniel Kimball and John Haseltine.

Mrs. Armstrong said there were 30 men who founded the school that had ties with the parish, back in 18 03.

"The purpose of the school at that time was to train the parishioners' sons and daughters for usefulness," Mrs. Armstrong said.

Many of the head and footstones in the burial area are elaborately engraved, which is being recorded by members of the CETA team that have an interest in history, Mrs. Armstrong said.
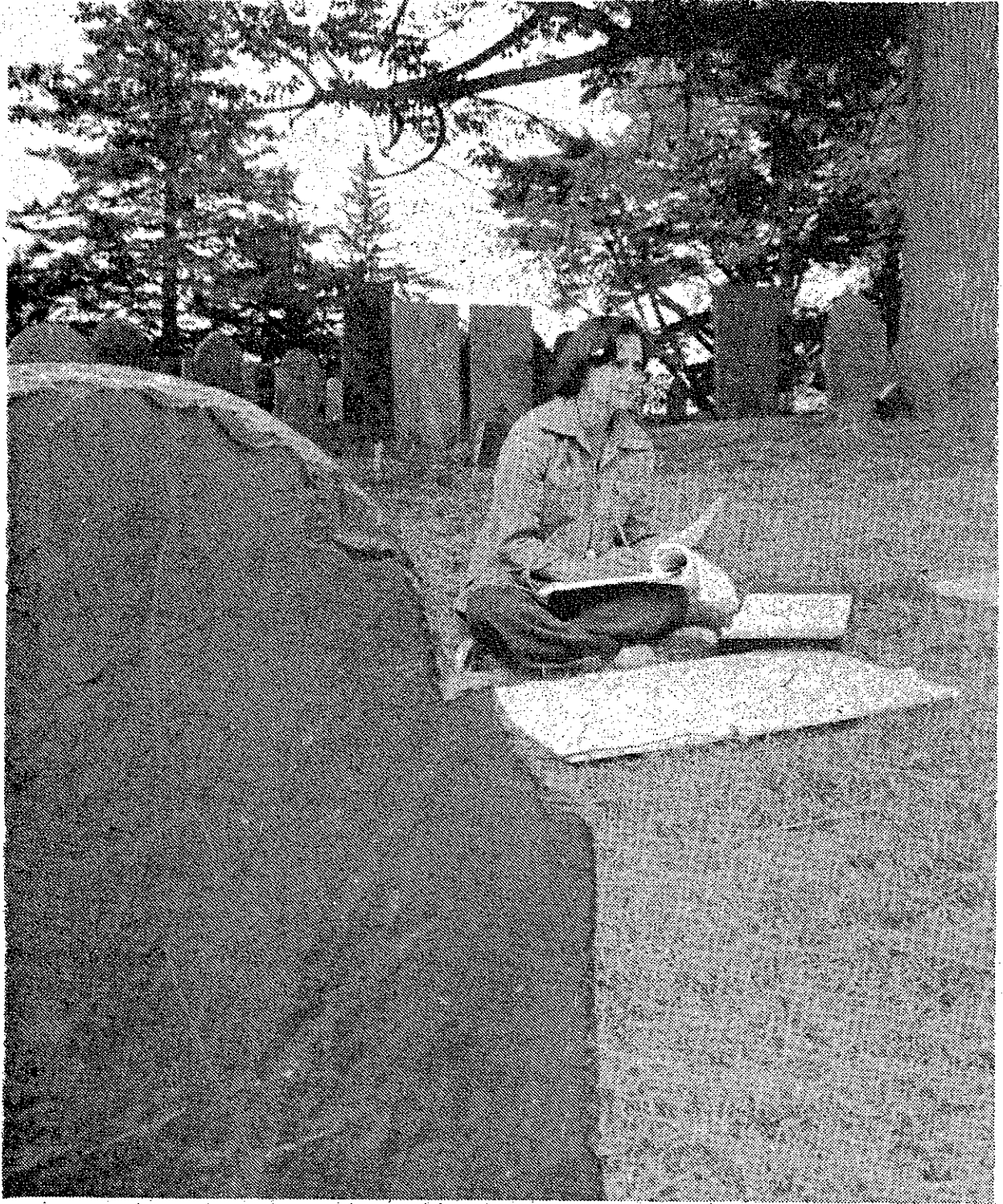
Among those keeping a report, for eventual typing and publication, are Benjamin Hastings, Amesbury; Maurice Kinser, Haverhill, and Barbara Carlisle, Haverhill, who is keeping secretarial records of historical data.

She thinks the grid work, at least, can start at the Pentucket site next week and added there are "only half as many headstones at the Pentucket Cemetery."

A number of Revolutionary War veterans are buried at both cemeteries, including the Civil War, War of 18 12, and the Indian Wars, Mrs. Armstrong said.

This is the type of historical information Mrs. Armstrong is retrieving, and one can appreciate the magnitude of the job when it is known there are 703 headstones at Bradford, and another 350 at Pentucket.

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BRADFORD AND PENTUCKET Buriel grounds are undergoing mapping, recording and transcribing of stones and land under a CETA Title V program in conjunction with the Haverhill Historical Commission. Coordinator for the program is commission member Mrs. Ann Armstrong. [Larry Kennedy Photo]

ARCHAEOLOGY CLASS from Bradford College, excavating an area at the old burial ground on Salem St., Bradford, Sunday afternoon, which is the original Bradford town center. The project conducted by Haverhill Historical Commission, is a survey excavation to find the foundations of old town buildings. From left, Mrs. Ann Armstrong, Ms. Anne Giesecke, archaeologist, project director; John Dunlap, and Chris Remignaati, students. (Jesionowski photo)

GAZETTE APR. 22, 1978