



Dorothy Goldman talks about a gravestone in the historic section of the Forest Hill Cemetery yesterday.

MIKE KALIL

Giving life to gravestones

◆ **Derry:** When Dorothy Goldman looks at Forest Hill Cemetery, she sees art, history and humanity.

By **MIKE KALIL**

Union Leader Correspondent

For Dorothy Goldman, cemeteries are more than just a place to bury the dead.

Goldman, 65, says she's had a huge interest in cem-

eteries since she was a child, and now she's spending her retirement years studying gravestones. Aside from being places for the dead to rest in peace, she says, cemeteries work as museums for history buffs and art galleries for those who appreciate gravestone carvings.

For more than a year, Goldman has been studying old gravestones at the Forest Hill Cemetery in East Derry. She expects the project, which requires painstaking detail, to take years to complete.

"These stones are the his-

tory of this whole area, not just Derry," Goldman said during a walk through the historic section yesterday.

She photographs and documents the stones in the historic section, many of which are currently unreadable, and plans to compile her research into a reference book that will make finding gravestones easier for relatives and other visitors.

Some of the stones are in great shape, but others are deteriorating, damaged, unreadable

► See **Graves**, Page B2

Graves

Continued From Page B1

or missing. Goldman, a Salem resident, hopes to form an organization that will clean, repair and maintain the stones. Town workers do a great job maintaining the cemetery's landscaping, she said, but they are not responsible for the upkeep of the gravestones.

Goldman, a frequent findagrave.com contributor, started the project after being contacted by Rick Holmes, the town historian and chairman of the heritage commission. Holmes said Goldman's enthusiasm is infectious.

"She's such a ball of fire. She has the energy of a 20-year-old," he said. "Every time I get tired, I just see what she's doing and I know I've got to keep moving."

Forest Hill, the town's only cemetery, was founded around 1721 and attracts cemetery students from all over, he said. The cemetery has veterans from many wars, including the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, King George's War and the War of 1812, as well as the area's first settlers.

"People who study gravestones love Forest Hill because our carving styles are pretty much unique to this area," he said.

Goldman worked for more than 40 years in the medical field before retiring. Her husband, Cyrus, died in 2005. She said she's studied gravestones at 52 cemeteries in New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Vermont.

That's not all she's up to: She teaches an introductory genealogy course at Northern Essex Community College's Haverhill, Mass., campus, runs two genealogy discussion groups and belongs to the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

Goldman has already posted some of her findings on the Find a Grave Web site, a volunteer-driven genealogy database.