In Tuesday’s column, we discussed the efforts of Randy Doaty and others to restore and maintain Pottstown’s historic Edgewood Cemetery at High and Keim streets.

Doaty noted the cemetery is not just a repository for dead bodies, but a “village of memories” to keep us in touch with those who have gone before us.

The cemetery is easily accessible to the public, with an open entrance and an ornamental fence on the High Street side only.

In the 19th century, especially, cemeteries were viewed as parks and arboretums — a quiet place for walks or even picnics.

But to protect against vandalism, many cemeteries were fenced in — including the Pottstown Cemetery between Charlotte and York streets — cutting them off from the surrounding neighborhood and reducing their purpose to occasional visits by survivors of the dead.

My wife frequently walked through Pottstown Cemetery on her way to and from Lincoln Elementary School, where she taught 26 years. She was one of many who enjoyed its calming atmosphere. She could take her second graders to the cemetery for math, calculating how old people were, and to see what the gravestones could tell us about our ancestors.

When the fence was erected, a marvelous community asset was diminished — a barrier to segregate the dead from the living.

EDGEOOD CEMETERY, above, which is being restored by a group of volunteers, is not fenced in. It therefore has the potential to become a lovely passive park like Philadelphia’s famous Laurel Hill Cemetery, below, where strolling, jogging, and bicycling is encouraged.

POTTSTOWN CEMETERY, below, between Charlotte and York streets, was accessible to the public until the 1980s, when a fence was erected to prevent vandalism. The fence unfortunately hinders public enjoyment of one of Pottstown’s most centrally located and loveliest open spaces.

Commentary by Tom Hylton