



To sit alone in the lamplight with a book spread out before you, and hold intimate converse with men of unseen generations--such is a pleasure beyond compare.

--- Kenko Yoshida

Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you feel that you, too, can become great.

--- Mark Twain

Volume 25, Issue 3

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Want to see your name in print? Submissions welcomed and will be used eventually.

The Editor

A VISIT TO THE CEMETERY:

Here are a few tips to make your visit to that old cemetery a pleasant experience.

You will be lucky if the cemetery is in a well-kept, suburban area, and is well documented by a local church, funeral director, or county courthouse. Unfortunately this is usually not the case. A good county map may show locations of cemeteries.

Marriage, birth and death certificates should be consulted first. These will pinpoint your ancestors in time, as well as provide you with the proper names. The locations listed on these records may assist you in finding the place that they lived and possibly where they died. Church records and obituaries may be your best bet for finding burial sites for your ancestors. Sometimes funeral directors may also be able to

provide you with burial information.

Deeds and Grants should be checked. The GRANTEE index at the local County Courthouse will be invaluable for determining places of residence as well as Probate records.

You may also find a plat map of the cemetery at the County Courthouse or a local historical society. These plats are drawings of the cemetery, much like a floor plan of a house, that indicates not only who is buried in the cemetery, but the exact grave site within the cemetery. When searching for the cemetery that contains the remains of your relatives, remember that most people were buried within 5 miles of their homes. Prior to 1850, particularly in rural areas, many peo-

ple were buried in small, privately maintained cemeteries, located on the family property or in cemeteries associated with the church of their particular faith. If the cemetery is still maintained, you should contact the caretaker, church secretary or pastor, or other official before you disturb any plantings, dig away dirt or grass from around a head or footstone or attempt to lift fallen stones.

Before you go trekking into the woods, you need to be properly prepared for the excursion. Build yourself a "Cemetery Kit" and consider first protecting yourself. You need to wear clothing appropriate for the terrain and weather that you will be facing. Wear protective clothing (jeans or work pants, and a

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It's All About Being There

Rick Sheldon

Sometimes you just have to be there. We just got back from a quick four day tour of Ohio. The primary reason for going there was a family reunion celebrating my Uncle's 90th Birthday. But no good genealogist (odd combination of words) would just do that without marrying in some research. So we spent time in my ancestors home town, plus had the time to visit some cemeteries. It's nice to be in the area where you are researching, something about being there and learning about things like the distances between towns and the Counties and actually seeing the area

where they once lived. Being in the town where they lived is awesome. It sure makes things easier when you can see how close or how far the different towns actually are. A map shows you the towns but traveling between them you begin to realize how close they can be. It is hard to explain, but the advantage that you get from visiting your families original hometown just adds so much to your knowledge when you are doing future research. I can now understand

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Annual Dues: \$10 Singles; \$12 Family. Membership period is March 1st to April 30th. Those with **UNPAID DUES (after April 30th.)** will not receive the Newsletter. **Send a SASE to receive a current membership card if you do not attend regular meetings.**

Contributions of neatly typed or written stories, requests for or giving information, queries, or other information of importance to the membership are welcomed.

The Society disclaims responsibility for statement of fact or opinion made by contributors and will not accept material with obvious errors.

It's About Being There

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some of the why's and wherefores that had puzzled me before. The added knowledge of the town and countryside is beyond value. The whole journey added so much knowledge and the additional research material, regarding my family in a very short time. Much more valuable than anything that you could get out of a library. There is also something about seeing where your ancestors are buried. Because of the time we spent in cemeteries trying to find graves, reading headstones and getting photographs of them, this is my cemetery edition of the newsletter, hope you can find so use out of the articles the next time you go ghost hunting.

The Editor

The Mesa County Genealogical Society was established in 1980 as a non-profit organization to promote an interest in genealogy. A Newsletter is published in March, June, September, and December. **Note: All Society meetings are held at the Museum of Western Colorado 7:00 p. m., on the second Thursday of each month.** Visitors are welcome. The Museum is located at 4th and Ute. The meetings are held in the conference room located in the Whitman School Building.

November 2005

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December 2005

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January 2006

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Cemetery Visits

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flannel shirt are advisable). It may be hot out, but don't be tempted to try to make your way through heavy overgrowth wearing shorts and a "T" shirt. A wide-brim hat can be a lifesaver on a hot sunny day. Be sure you have good walking shoes or boots and thick socks. Don't wear thongs, sandals or canvas.

Make sure you have plenty of drinking water and perhaps some snack foods. You would also be well advised to take enough water to enable you to wash off your arms, legs and face once you return to your car. Use plenty of insect repellent on your shoes, socks, and pants legs and consider treating your skin with repellent. Be sure to bring a small First Aid Kit and possibly a Snake Bite Kit. First Aid Kits for campers will be light and compact and probably available at most department stores or sporting goods stores.

Don't forget the sun screen blocker cream or lotion. Beware of poison ivy or poison oak. The other caution is yellow jackets and bees. They are attracted to the sugar in open cans of soda and half eaten fruit. It is especially painful to take a swallow of soda pop and find that a yellow jacket was drinking in the can and is now in your mouth.

A few tools will also come in handy. In areas that are particularly wild or overgrown, a machete will just about be a necessity. You will need something to break a trail through dense brush. You also need to take a small set of hand garden tools including a small garden shovel and hand held hoe. The two tools will be needed to clear grass and dirt away from headstones and footstones that may have sunk. And lastly you should take some kind of wooden pry bar. You will find that some headstones may have fallen over and if lying face down will have to be turned. A pry bar will help you do this. I suggest wood, such as oak, as metal instruments may scar or fracture the stone. Include a pair of heavy canvas gardening gloves in your kit. Another

good idea for the tool kit is a four-foot rod of reinforcing bar (rebar) used for probing for sunken headstones.

Assuming that no plat map was available to lead you to the exact site, you will have to walk up and down the row of graves, examining each stone. At cemeteries where woods closely bound the cemetery, be sure to go a bit into the trees in each direction to be sure that you have found all of the grave sites. Look for fences, stone walls, or corner stones that may mark the boundaries of the cemetery. You may want to bring some graph paper along to diagram the layout of the area where your ancestors are buried. This will help to remember where the graves were. Be sure to write down any fixed objects that will help locate the grave and the drives and also include compass directions (N, S, E, W).

A great way to save your memories of that visit is with a video camera. Take extra batteries and extra video tapes with you. Video taping creates a record of the condition of the tombstones at the time you visited. Some tombstones may not be readable in five or ten years but the video tape will always be there. Why not do a test taping at a local cemetery to develop a technique before you embark on your trip to that distant cemetery. If you don't have a video camera, take along your tape recorder and a couple of cameras instead. A tip for photographers is to bring a roll of aluminum foil with you and set it up to reflect the sunlight onto or away from a poorly lit stone - or better yet - use a large mirror. Take along lots of film and have one of the cameras loaded with black and white film. Take pictures with both cameras in case one doesn't come out. Hopefully one of them will have a long cable release or take along a friend to help you. A tripod would be most helpful. Once you set up your camera and focus as best you can, use the mirror to reflect light onto the stone and take your pictures from different angles with the mirror placed in different locations. You should definitely make a written record of what is inscribed on the headstone and the footstone if there is one as photographs will often fail to pickup all of the inscriptions on the stone.

Whether you take photographs, rubbings, or both, you may need to clean the stone first. You can try a block of Styrofoam to clean off lichen and moss which damage stone. When cleaning a stone, remember that you must not cause any more damage than is already there. Most accumulated dirt and debris can be removed with a brush. Select a brush that is soft enough to not damage the stone but strong enough to remove clods of dirt. Or use your garden tools to remove grass and dirt from the base of the stone until all of the inscription is revealed. Don't dig farther than necessary as you don't want to cause the stone to topple over. You may need to use a little water to get dirt out of the inscriptions. Plain water and gentle scrubbing from the bottom up does wonders for removing soil and most lichens. Soap is not recommended for cleaning gravestones.

In order to read the inscriptions, some have recommended using shaving cream. Shaving cream is damaging to gravestones and is not recommended. One method you might try - place a soaking wet lightweight piece of white cloth flat on the stone - "ironing" it with the fingers. The words will show up, especially if incised.

Many types of paper can be used to take the rubbing on, including newsprint, tracing paper, architects paper, shelf paper, or pella. You can purchase pella at just about any fabric or craft shop and other papers will be available at most art supply stores. You are going to need some medium to transfer the rubbing. There are many things you can use; crayon, graphite, charcoal and boot wax are a few of the choices. Bootwax on the pella makes an attractive rubbing, and graphite or charcoal on newsprint is another good selection. You can get boot wax at most shoe repair shops and sticks of charcoal and graphite are available at art supply stores. Graphite sticks are often available in several colors and other drawing sticks are also available. You will need some tape to hold the paper in place on the stone while you make the rubbing. Freezer or masking tape doesn't leave a lot of residue when you remove it from the stone and it will also stick to a

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Visits

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damp stone. Cut a piece of your material (paper or pellen, etc.) approximately the same size as the stone and secure it tightly across the surface of the stone using the tape. Begin rubbing at the upper left corner of the stone and work across and down. Rub in a diagonal direction as rubbing straight up and down or side to side will tend to stretch the paper and cause it to tear or make a distorted image. Whatever you have chosen to make the rubbing with, use a broad side or edge (several inches long) to rub with. You do not need to rub hard but rubbing too gently will cause you to lose the detail. Be sure that you are happy with your results before you remove the paper and that all lettering is legible. Once you remove the paper don't try to replace it in the same location. When you are done with the rubbing remove it carefully from the stone, and lay it flat. Remove all tape and residue from the stone. You should now "fix" the rubbing. If you are using charcoal, or graphite the image can be easily fixed with either hair spray or a commercial fixative available at the art supply store. I store my rubbings in tubes such as from wrapping paper. They are particularly good for this but you can buy mailing tubes commercially if you like. Cemetery rubbings are fun to do. They can be mounted or framed and make an interesting conversation piece. The rubbings can be stapled to a couple of dowels or matted and framed. They are particularly interesting if you use more than one color in your rubbing.

The Oldstone Enterprises, 77 Summer Street, Boston, Mass. 01110 sells a kit with directions for making rubbings of grave stones. Their materials may also be purchased from the Hearthstone Bookshop, 8405-H Richmond Highway, Alexandria, Va. 22309. The paper you want to use is sometimes referred to as "synthetic rice paper" or "print makers paper". Anything that does not tear easily will probably do. You may also use the non-woven interfacing or pattern materials that are sold at dress fabric stores, such as PEL-LON (non-fusible variety). Oldstone sells

a crayon that is about the size and shape of a bar of hand soap. Carpenter's crayon or Lumberman's crayon may also be used, or a crayon from the thick box of carioles would do. If you find the right kind of paper, no spray or protective materials need be used.

A "leave-behind" might be several miniature pedigree charts in a small glass jar with a tight-fitting lid. I use a copy machine that reduces a 4 generation pedigree chart to index card size. Be sure your name and address are on each one either with a stamp or a sticker or type it on the back. Put a few of these in a jar and leave it by the headstone.

Be sure to clean up the site before you leave. Once you get back to your car rinse off your arms and legs using either water or a gentle antiseptic. If you have ever had chigger bites you will understand why this is advisable. Once back to the hotel or your home, be sure to wash thoroughly and apply astringent all over. Be careful of ticks that you may pick up in the woods.

GLOBAL POSITIONING SYSTEM:

Add a GPS in your cemetery kit - a hand held device about the size of a cell phone. It receives signals from a series of satellites circling the globe. If you go to the center of the cemetery and take a reading, and record the latitude and longitude those cemetery locations will be known, forever, even if the stones are totally obliterated with time. Generations of the future will always know the location, even hundreds of years from now, of that site. As the ravages of acid rain, vandalism, development continue, there will be a record of the location of our ancestors final "home". I know everyone can't afford to go out to buy a GPS receiver, but maybe your local societies can - or maybe you could borrow one from a mountain climber or hiker, when you do your excursions. The price has been dropping on these units, as well as better features have been added. this technology can also be used for marking ancestral homesteads and lands, so even if the land gets developed into suburban sub-divisions, you'll know where the home originally stood. It's just nice to be able to put a location down that will never change, even centuries from now. You can compute the exact position of the grave and store this information as a "waypoint".

CLEANING GRAVESTONES:

First - check the condition of the stone on all surfaces. No stone should be cleaned if its condition is questionable or there is some sign that the stone is delicate, brittle, or otherwise vulnerable. If there is any question as to the stone's condition, do not attempt to clean it as the surface could be damaged in the process.

Mix a solution of one heaping tablespoon of ORVUS to one gallon of clean water. ORVUS is a detergent that comes in either liquid or paste form and can be found in feed stores.

Wet the stone thoroughly with clear water to make sure the detergent solution will not be absorbed directly into the dry stone. Do not let it dry. Use natural, bristled, wooden handled brushes of various sizes and rinse thoroughly with lots of clean water. Never use abrasives, acids, solvents, household cleaners or wire brushes to clean the stone.

When cleaning marble or limestone, one tablespoon of household ammonia can be added to the above mixture. This will help remove some greases and oils. Do not use ammonia on or near any bronze or other metal elements. Do not clean marble, limestone, or sandstone more than once every 18 months. These types of stone may occasionally be rinsed with clean water. Granite can be cleaned as needed.

Lichens and algae can be removed by first thoroughly soaking the stone and then using a wooden scrapper to gently remove the growth. This process may need to be repeated several times.

Cemetery Records Online is the leading online library of cemetery transcriptions. They have over 722,000 burial records from more than 2,100 cemeteries around the world, and all freely accessible. Visit their site at: <http://www.interment.net>

Shirley Hornbeck's This and That Genealogy Tips on Cemeteries

This and That Genealogy Tips, Genealogy Tips on Cemeteries.
homepages.rootsweb.com/~hornbeck/cemetery.htm

Using a GPS Device

Steve Paul Johnson

My wife and I, along with a friend of ours, were deep in the southeastern California desert in search of a small cemetery used by workers of the Southern Pacific Railroad during the late 1800s. It was called "Amos Cemetery", and we were told it was about 14 miles north of Glamis along the Ted Kipf road.

So along we drove, stirring up dust and sand in our 4x4s in search of this place. We finally had to stop and ask a group of dirt bikers if they knew where it was. They told us we had overshot it about a mile back. We went back and finally found it.

When I got back home, I downloaded the photos into my laptop, and began preparing the webpage to publish on Interment.net. I always try to include directions on how to get to the cemetery, but this one was tough. I did manage to write some directions, but they were not any more helpful than those that were originally given to us. If I tried to go back there 10 years from now, I may forget how to find it.

I decided I should invest in a GPS device.

GPS, short for Global Positioning System, is a system of 24 satellites that orbit the earth constantly measuring their positions. The GPS Device is a machine that sends and receives signals to and from the satellites in an effort to determine your current position. GPS devices were long used by boats and airplanes, but the technology has become so affordable, that consumers can now buy them for personal use.

With a GPS device in hand, you can stand in the middle of a cemetery, and it will determine the latitude and longitude coordinates, and even altitude if it has enough satellites tracked. A device can store your location in memory so that you can refer back to it later on. When publishing your cemetery tran-

scription, noting the coordinates will provide readers with a precise location. Should someone have a GPS device of their own, they will be able to find the cemetery easily.

To find a cemetery, simply enter the coordinates into the GPS device, and it will point the way. The lower-end models will use a compass pointer to show you which way to go, along with the distance, your current traveling speed, and estimated time of arrival. Higher-end models include mapping data to provide a street map. Most all GPS devices will update its information every second.

I did a lot of research on the Internet trying to figure out what I should buy, what brands are the best, and to learn something about the features so that I could decide what I would need. Garmin does make a lots of models. Since I planned to use the device during my hikes, I decided to get the higher quality unit. Most camping and sporting goods stores sell them.

So now, with coordinates in hand, it doesn't bother me too much if my driving directions are really bad. I can just note the coordinates. It's still wise to write a set of directions, at least to identify a general region, but provide the coordinates to pinpoint the exact location. In time, GPS devices will become more popular as prices go down. Most high-end cars have them built into the dash. You can even enter the coordinates into MapQuest.com and it will produce a road map for you.

All devices have the ability to remember the locations you mark. My Garmin GPS 12 will store up to 500 locations (or commonly referred to as "waypoints"). You can assign a short name to each location, and even an icon. You can even buy mapping software for your PC that will allow you to assemble a list of destinations, and then download to your GPS device. You could mark coordinates for your great-

grandfather's old house. In fact, it might be a good idea just to mark the coordinates of old graveyards and structures, before they get torn down, or covered up by the sands of time. Even if old buildings remain standing, the roads leading to them may wither away, and later generations may have a tough time trying to follow the original directions.

The U.S. Geological Survey has compiled a database of geographic names, including cemeteries, along with their latitude and longitude coordinates. You can enter these coordinates into your GPS device and let it point the way. Most GPS devices require you to be within 500 miles of your destination before it can provide you with directions.

The U.S. Geological Survey has compiled a database of geographic names, including cemeteries, along with their latitude and longitude coordinates. You can enter these coordinates into your GPS device and let it point the way. Most GPS devices require you to be within 500 miles of your destination before it can provide you with directions.

I found that the coordinates presented by the U.S. Geological Survey may not be definitive enough. The coordinates they provide are accurate up to about 100 feet. That's because they don't break down the seconds into tenths or hundredths. Each second in a latitude position represents approximately 100 feet. A GPS device will give you exact coordinates in hundredths, giving you resolution to within 1 foot.

I've even corresponded with a guy who claimed the USGS coordinates are off by about 10 miles. He admitted that not all the geographic names are off,

Even though the GPS is capable of providing 1 foot resolution of device and the satellites. Still, navigation experts claim that you can expect accuracy to accuracy, it will never actually be that accurate. That's because there are so many weather factors that can offset

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Replacing V.A. Markers & Headstones

Previously furnished headstones and markers may be replaced at Government expense when badly deteriorated, illegible, stolen or vandalized. A replacement is also available if the headstone or marker is different from that specified by the applicant or permitted by the cemetery, the inscription is incorrect, if it was damaged in transit, or the material or workmanship does not meet specifications.

Government headstones or markers in private cemeteries damaged by cemetery personnel will not be replaced at Government expense. Marble or granite headstones or markers, when removed from a grave, must be destroyed until illegible and bronze markers must be returned to the contractor.

Please contact Memorial Programs Service at 1-800-697-6947 for guidance on obtaining a replacement headstone or marker.

Inscriptions

Government-provided headstones and markers must be inscribed with the name of the decedent, branch of service, and the year of birth and death, in this order.

Headstones and markers may be inscribed with certain optional items including an authorized emblem of belief, and space permitting, additional text including grade, rate or rank, war service, complete dates of birth and death, military awards, military organizations and civilian or veteran affiliations. Terms of endearments that meet acceptable standards of good taste may also be added with VA's approval. Most optional inscription items are placed as the last lines of the inscription on a Government-provided headstone or marker.

No graphics (logos, symbols, etc.) are permitted on Government-provided headstones and markers other than the approved emblems of belief, the Civil War Union Shield

and the Civil War Confederate Southern Cross of Honor and the Medal of Honor insignias. Inscriptions for Government-provided headstones and markers will be in English text only. Documentation must be provided with VA Form 40-1330, *Application for Standard Government Headstone or Marker for Installation in a Private or State Veterans' Cemetery*, when requesting military awards in the inscription. In most cases this information is provided on the veteran's military discharge documents. Military awards and decorations (including those from foreign governments) other than those listed in Block 8 may be inscribed as optional inscriptions at Government expense at the bottom of the headstone or marker. They should be requested in Block 27. Documentation confirming these awards must be submitted with the application.

Civilian titles such as Doctor or Reverend, or any other additions to the name are not permitted on the name line of a Government-provided headstone or marker.

A veteran's spouse or other non-veteran dependent is not eligible to receive a Government-provided headstone or marker for placement in a private cemetery; however, the applicant may request to reserve inscription space below the veteran's inscription so that the non-veteran dependent's commemorative data can be inscribed locally, at private expense, when the non-veteran dependent is buried. Or the non-veteran dependent's name and date of birth can be added at Government expense when the headstone or marker is ordered. When the non-veteran dependent is buried the date of death may then be added at private expense.

For additional information, please visit the Headstones and Markers page at the National Cemetery Administration.

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Using a GPS Device

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the timing of the signals bouncing back and forth between the within 15 to 40 feet.

Most devices, will allow you to create a "trip". A trip is a series of destinations that you wish to visit. Once you have assembled the destinations for your trip, the device will tell you distance, in miles, that separate each destination. On the lower end models, the distance is measured as a straight line, which is not usually practical when driving on roads. But higher end models, with mapping data, can plot a driving course, and provide you with more accurate distance.

Some people will tell you that the U.S. Government purposely feeds bogus data into the satellites so that they won't be accurate enough for terrorists or foreign aggressors to utilize. Well, that used to be true! The U.S. military had

devices that could overcome the inaccuracies. But on May 1, 2000, President Clinton signed an order to cease this practice.

With the popularity of GPS devices in the consumer market, people have been compiling databases of locations. Most of the locations represents trailheads, geographic formations, and such. Many such databases are being published on the web. I'd like to see a similar database of cemeteries, one that is more accurate than the USGS, and includes the tens of thousands of small graveyards that they have left out.

In fact, as a cemetery publisher, I would like to see more cemetery recordists invest in GPS devices and make a habit of marking coordinates. It's probably the best means we have for preserving the locations of abandoned graveyards.

Tips for Photographing Gravestones

by Maureen Taylor

There is so much misinformation available on the right way to document a gravestone marker that it is a wonder that any of them are still standing. These monuments to our ancestors are permanent reminders of a loved one when properly cared for. Unfortunately, a lot of damage is innocently done in the name of preservation. For instance, the common practice of creating a rubbing is actually harmful and in some states is illegal. Many school groups studying local history make rubbings of gravestone markers to use in the classroom. However, rubbings are abrasive and damage the surface of the stone by eventually wearing away the carving or loosening bits of soft stone. Even the most careful and gentle rubbing causes decay.

Photography offers an alternative. With the right equipment, bright sunlight and a little patience you can use images of headstones for educational purposes or add them to a family photo archive. Taking a picture is an ideal way to document the information on the stone without causing deterioration. Once you have taken these pictures, why not add them to the online Virtual Cemetery to create a memorial to your ancestors? You will be able to share your discoveries with other researchers. You can also transfer the gravestone images into a Family Tree Maker scrapbook for those individuals thus adding depth to your genealogical data.

By using these helpful tips you will be able to create professional looking images of cemetery markers.

Basic Requirements

Patience

Photographing gravestones takes

planning. You may have to wait several days for the right combination of factors such as light and weather in order to take the best possible images. Rushing the process will only result in poor quality photos.

Light

Bright sunlight is necessary to highlight the stone's features. Ideally midday sun that hits the stone at a 30-degree angle is best. Other types of sunlight emphasize imperfections in the stone and can make the carving look flat. The stone's location influences when that might be available. For instance, gravestones in New England often face west and are best photographed at midday, while stones that face north should be photographed in the late afternoon. Those facing south are well-lit all day in midsummer but not during the rest of the year.

You can improve the quality of light by reflecting it with a mirror to highlight the stone and carving. A plastic full-length mirror works well. Ideally, the stone should not be taller than the mirror. If you are only focusing on a section then a small mirror can be used. Since you will need to position the mirror it would be helpful to have either a partner or a tripod with you. If the sunlight is too strong you can create some shading by either standing in front of the direct sunlight or by using a large dark cloth or cardboard as a shield. If the stone is located in the shadows, you may be able to use two mirrors to help you reflect light. Keep in mind that you still need a sunny day.

Equipment

Type of Camera

The Association For Gravestone

Studies recommends using a 35 mm SLR that is outfitted with either a 50-55mm lens or a wide angle 35mm lens for crowded areas. Smaller lenses will distort the straight lines in the image. If you intend to digitize the pictures, you might want to use a digital camera. It will reduce the number of steps involved in digitizing the image and save you the expense of film processing.

Film

If you are utilizing a 35 mm SLR, either black and white or color film can be used. Black and white Tri-x film is a good choice. Filters can be helpful when shooting black and white images. An orange filter increases the contrast while a polarizing filter can reduce glare. Exposure times of 1/250th or 1/500th are suggested. Color film with an ASA of 200 shot at 1/250th of a second should yield a good result.

Technique

Since you are creating a record of the cemetery in addition to photographing a single stone you should take several images of the same marker. For example:

- One showing the whole cemetery.
- Shoot an image that includes the closest stones and provides context.
- Photograph the whole gravestone so that inscription and carving are visible.
- Make sure to take at least one picture where the inscription fills the camera frame.

Unless you are extremely lucky, most of the stones you want to photograph will not be straight due to ground settling. In the case of leaning stones, tilting the camera should

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Other Ways to Improve the Quality of the Photograph

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eliminate the slant.

Background

As you focus the camera you may notice distracting background elements such as telephone poles, trees and other monuments. Since you want your picture to be essentially about the stones you are photographing, you need to eliminate those articles. You can use a background cloth or cardboard as a backdrop, but make sure that whatever you use is free of imperfections or they will be more distracting than the original problems. If you are going to photograph a large number of cemetery monuments you may want to invest in a piece of Formica mounted on 1/4 inch plywood. Be sure to have a handhold cut into the side for easy carrying. Any store that manufactures kitchen counters should be able to provide what you need. A neutral shade other than gray enhances the appearance of the stone.

Other Ways to Improve the Quality of the Photograph

Cleaning the Stone

Cleaning a cemetery stone is a controversial topic. The first rule of conservation and preservation is to cause no damage. Unfortunately, by using household cleaners, chalk and shaving cream to enhance the lettering you may injure the surface in ways that are not readily apparent. Caution should be used before you destroy what you set out to preserve.

Over the centuries several different types of stones have been used to create gravestones. Some of the stones are quite porous and fragile, while others are resistant to damage. Be careful when attempting to improve the readability of the inscription. Types of stone:

- Prior to the Nineteenth century: Sandstone or slate
- Nineteenth Century: Marble and gray granite
- Late nineteenth century to the present: Polished granite or marble

There are a few things that you can do that will not cause injury.

- A soft brush or natural sponge and water will help you remove surface soil. Gentle brushing should

remove surface dirt and bird droppings. Power washing should not be used; water should flow over the stone or be delicately sprayed onto the surface. Never use hard objects or stiff brushes to clean the stone. Removing lichens with sharp objects may inadvertently destroy the surface.

- Not all cemeteries are regularly maintained. By trimming tall weeds around the base of the stone and cutting the grass you may discover epitaphs hidden under the overgrowth.

Documentation

Local historians and genealogists have transcribed inscription information for generations. Many of these handwritten and typewritten efforts are now being entered into databases, some of which are available online. What is innovative is the use of photography to create a photographic record of both the inscription and the carvings. By using a pictorial representation of the headstone as part of the database, you are able to see what actually appears on the stone including both the epitaph and the artistic carving. It is a record of what the cemetery marker looked like at a particular time before further damage occurs or the stone disappears.

If you live near or know about a cemetery in your area, why not assist with the preservation efforts by photographing each stone in it for future reference? A local historical society or cemetery association will appreciate your efforts. Be sure to check with them before embarking on the project so that there is no duplication of effort.

A basic record sheet on a cemetery should include the following:

- Location
- Map of the cemetery with the stones numbered
- When photographed (time, date, and frame number)
- Transcription of the epitaph

For a discussion of what should be included in a basic record sheet consult this paper by B.W. Hutchinson. Database software is available from the Association For Gravestone Studies and is being used by cemetery pro-

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Cemetery Do's and Don'ts

why can't I use shaving cream to highlight inscriptions on difficult to read stones?

Our professional conservators tell us it is definitely not a good idea to use shaving cream on porous gravestones because there are chemicals, greasy emollients, in shaving cream that are sticky and very difficult to remove from the stone with a simple wash-

ing. Indeed, even with vigorous scrubbing and lots of rinsing, the cream fills in the pores of a porous stone and cannot all be removed. The result of leaving it there is that in time it may discolor or damage the stone.

Instead, use a mirror to shine sunlight across the face of a stone, making the lettering stand out. For an explanatory leaflet on this technique, see Store Directory, Field Guides, "Photographing

Gravestones." Always prefer a non-invasive method on gravestones just as we do on medical tests on our own bodies.

Some Gravestone Rubbings Dos and Don'ts

From "Gravestone Rubbing for Beginners," a leaflet available from the Association for Gravestone Studies

Gravestone rubbing is fun. It is possible to collect some beautiful artwork that can be framed and displayed. A carver's skill can be preserved, or an ancestor's stone recorded and appreciated through this craft. However, gravestone rubbing is also controversial. Especially in cemeteries where a restoration project is in progress, rubbing is often banned. This is to enable the restorers to have an opportunity to preserve all the stones possible before more damage occurs. Even if a restoration project is not in progress, if the those who care for the cemetery have determined there are very fragile stones there which may be damaged if pressure is applied to the surface as happens in rubbing, there may be prohibitions in place. So be sure to check.

Below are some Do's and Don'ts that will make your experience in the cemetery a good one.

Please Do

- Check (with cemetery superintendent, cemetery commissioners, town clerk, historical society, whoever is in charge) to see if rubbing is allowed in the cemetery.
- Get permission and/or a permit as required.
- Rub only solid stones in good condition. Check for any cracks, evidence of previous breaks and adhesive repairs, defoliating stone with air pockets behind the face of the stone that will collapse under pressure of rubbing, etc
- Become educated; learn how to rub responsibly.
- Use a soft brush and plain water to do any necessary stone cleaning.
- Make certain that your paper covers the entire face of the stone; secure with masking tape.
- Use the correct combination of paper and waxes or inks; avoid magic

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Photo Tips

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jects across the United States. If you want to learn more about photographing cemetery markers or are curious about the history of gravestone carving you can contact the following organizations:

The Association For Gravestone Studies

278 Main St., Suite 207, Greenfield, MA 01301 (413) 772-0836

They sell a basic information kit through their gift shop and publish an annual journal on gravestone history called *Markers*. Membership is open to all interested individuals. The AGS holds an annual conference with workshops, lectures, and tours. For more information and registration forms consult their Web site. The society also maintains a lending library for members.

Connecticut Gravestone Network

Founded in 1995, their mission is to educate individuals about the history and preservation of cemetery art. Their Web site includes a list of do's and don'ts.

Virtual Cemetery

Share your discoveries with others

by adding your gravestone photographs to this online database of images and information.

References

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About the Author

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Tiptoeing Through the Graveyard

A Guide to Discovering Your Ancestors in Cemeteries

The practice of marking the final resting place of a loved one goes back thousands of years. The ancient pyramids are conceivably the greatest example, standing today as a reminder of the ancient Egyptian glorification of life after death. Roman catacombs, a subterranean burial place for early Christians, contained niches where the fully clothed bodies were placed and which were then sealed with a slab inscribed with the name of the deceased, date of death and a religious symbol. Many of the elaborate grave markers erected in the 19th and early 20th centuries were styled after the memorials of the ancient Greek, Roman and Egyptian civilizations. Following the first World War, grave markers started to become smaller and less elaborate - plain crosses and simple, upright stone slabs decorated with carvings, symbols and epitaphs.

Cemeteries are living lessons in history. People who buried their dead said much about themselves and the ones who had died. While not considered a primary information source, gravestones are an excellent source of dates, birthplaces, maiden names, spouses' names and parents' names. They can also provide evidence of military service, membership in a fraternal organization and religious affiliations.

Why should you visit the cemetery if you already have a birth and death date for your ancestor? Because you never know what you may find. Nearby gravestones can lead you to other family members. Little grave markers can tell the story of children who died in infancy for whom no other records exist. Flowers left on a grave may lead you to living descendants.

Other than a few records and documents and, perhaps, some family jewelry or heirlooms, your ancestor's tombstone is the only physical evidence of the life they lived. There is nothing in your genealogical research that will connect you to your ancestor more than to stand in the one place on earth which contains their mortal remains and to see important pieces of their ed into stone. It is an amazing, awe-inspiring experience.

Now that you have located the cemetery where your ancestor is buried, a little advance planning can really help to make your visit a success.

If you have a choice in the matter, the best time to visit a cemetery is in the spring or fall - especially if it is one which is neglected and overgrown. Brush and grass will not be as high in the spring, which will help you to discern holes, rocks and other such obstacles before you trip over them. Sometimes the season can have an impact on whether you even find the cemetery at all. I have located several family cemeteries in the southeastern U.S. which are situated in the middle of cornfields. Needless to say, it is nearly impossible to find such cemeteries when the corn is taller than you are!

The well-dressed cemetery researcher wears long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, sturdy shoes and gloves to help ward off critters such as snakes, gnats, ticks and mosquitoes. If the cemetery is in a wooded or rural location you may also want to bring along a hoe to help cut down brush and a friend or fellow researcher for safety.

Whether the cemetery is public or private, you should do a search for existing records. Most commonly known as sexton's records (a sexton is a caretaker responsible for the cemetery), these records can include burial registers, plat maps and plot records. These records will vary greatly by country and time period and may not exist, but never assume! A sign outside of the cemetery may be able to point you to its caretaker. Turn to the local phone book to contact area funeral directors or churches. Check with the area library or historical/genealogical society for tips on possible record locations. You may be surprised by what you can find.

One last thing - before you visit a private cemetery, be sure to get permission from the land owner.

Plan Ahead for a Successful Cemetery Visit

- Dress appropriately
- Bring paper, several pencils, a camera and plenty of film
- Consider bringing optional "toys" such as

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Graveyard

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a video camera, tape recorder or a Palm Pilot

- Extra batteries for anything that may need them!
- If you plan to do any tombstone rubbings, then be sure to bring the appropriate supplies
- Water, rags and a soft nylon bristle brush for cleaning stones, plus clippers for clearing away grass and brush
- If you are looking for unmarked cemeteries, you may want to bring a map so that you can mark their locations as you locate them

The highlight of any trip to the cemetery is reading the stones. Once you have taken that irresistible quick peek for your ancestor's headstone, however, you should stop and plan out your route around the cemetery. Methodical might be boring, but it greatly decreases your chances of missing something important.

If the cemetery is not too large, and you have enough time, it can be very helpful to make a complete transcription of the cemetery. Even if you only make note of the names and dates on each tombstone, along with their location in the cemetery, this can save you a trip back in the future as well as help other researchers.

There is a lot of information and

advice available on the proper methods for transcribing tombstones. While these can serve as great reference guides, there is really no need to worry about formality. The important thing is to make a note of everything that you see.

Make Your Visit Count

- Write down names, dates and inscriptions **exactly** as they appear on the stone. It is very easy to make assumptions in the excitement of the moment, and it will be very beneficial to have an accurate record as you move forward (or backward as the case may be) with your research.
- Be sure to sketch any symbols that you are unfamiliar with so that you can look them up later. These symbols or emblems may be valuable clues to membership in an organization which may have records about your ancestor.
- Make a note of the relationship between tombstones as well. Family members will often be buried together in the same plot. Nearby graves may belong to parents. Small unmarked stones may indicate children that died in their infancy. Neighbors and relatives may also be buried in adjoining sections.
- As you make your way around, be sure not to miss the back of the stones as they can also contain important information.
- Another good way to record cemetery information is to use a cassette recorder or even a video camera as you move around the cemetery. You can read off names, dates and inscriptions easily and make note of important information, such as when you start a new row. It also provides you with a backup for any written transcriptions that you have made.
- Pictures are worth a thousand words and are much better for tombstones than chalk or shaving cream. Use hand-held clippers to clear brush away from the stone and then use a nylon (never wire) bristle brush and plain water to clean the stone from bottom to top, rinsing well as you go. A bright sunny day and a mirror to help reflect the sunlight on the stone can really help to bring out the carvings.
- Enjoy yourself! Visiting cemeteries is one of the most rewarding parts of genealogy research, so stop and take the time to commune with your ancestors.

Do's Don'ts

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marker-type pens or other permanent color materials.

- Test paper and color before working on stone to be certain that no color bleeds through.

- Rub gently, carefully.

- Leave the stone in better condition than you found it.

- Take *all* trash with you; replace any grave site materials that you may have disturbed.

Please *Don't*

- Don't attempt to rub deteriorating marble or sandstone, or any unsound or weakened stone (for example, a stone that sounds hollow when gently tapped or a stone that is flaking, splitting, blistered, cracked, or unstable on its base).

- Don't use detergents, soaps, vinegar, bleach, or any other cleaning solutions on the stone, no matter how mild!

- Don't use shaving cream, chalk,

graphite, dirt, or other concoctions in an attempt to read worn inscriptions. Using a large mirror to direct bright sunlight diagonally across the face of a gravemarker casts shadows in indentations and makes inscriptions more visible.

- Don't use stiff-bristled or wire brushes, putty knives, nail files, or any metal object to clean or to remove lichen from the stone; Soft natural bristled brushes, whisk brooms, or wooden sticks are usually OK if used gently and carefully

- Don't attempt to remove stubborn lichen. Soft lichen may be thoroughly soaked with plain water and then loosened with a gum eraser or a wooden popsicle stick. Be gentle. Stop if lichen does not come off easily.

- Don't use spray adhesives, scotch tape, or duct tape. Use masking tape.

- Don't use any rubbing method that you have not actually practiced under supervision.

- Don't leave masking tape, waste-