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Preservation of Historic Burial Grounds

by Lynette Strangstad



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Cemeteries and graveyards, often visited as parks and historic sites, are places to commemorate the dead—whether family member, friend, or historic figure—and to reflect on the past. We often think of these sites as peaceful and serene settings in which to spend a pleasant afternoon. Historical burial sites offer this, of course, and much more. Such sites yield vast amounts of information regarding our biocultural, historic, artistic, and architectural heritage.

For many years, burial sites were not recognized as important historic sites within the cultural landscape. If they were valued at all, they were seen merely as a collection of stones whose significance lay in recording genealogical data and denoting the final resting place of prominent individuals.

In the last decade, however, increased public interest and concern for our threatened burial sites has resulted in the development of this new area of historic preservation. Due to the recent nature of this development, relatively little written information is available and it is often difficult to locate someone knowledgeable about the preservation of historic burial sites.

This publication is designed to meet the need for information that both the general citizenry and professionals alike may have when considering the preservation of these historic burial grounds. Basic knowledge of the field is offered to help organizations and individuals understand the significance of historic burial

grounds, identify concerns relevant to their preservation, and recognize methods appropriate to their conservation. The booklet covers project organization, plan development, setting priorities, maintenance, and conservation appropriate to these historic sites.

For present purposes, “historic burial sites” refers primarily to 17th-, 18th-, and 19th-century burial grounds, graveyards, and churchyards. Admittedly, this narrow definition excludes most Native American, prehistoric, and modern sites. Although the same basic principles apply to preservation of all these sites, earlier American Indian and prehistoric sites require additional noninvasive archeological and anthropological analysis which is best addressed separately. For the most part, 20th-century cemeteries differ enough from historic burial grounds that they are not addressed here. For example, most modern cemeteries contain primarily granite markers, still actively receive burials, are regularly maintained, and have established funding mechanisms, considerations not common to earlier sites.

For purposes of burial ground preservation, the following definitions regarding processes apply. “Preservation” refers to activities that help perpetuate and care for historic burial sites, including planning, maintenance, documentation, and education. “Conservation” refers to mechanical and chemical processes used to treat damaged markers. “Restoration” may occasionally apply to burial grounds, although



Burial markers provide important historic, cultural, architectural and artistic information.

— Photo by Lynette Strangstad.

it implies “making like new,” and significant intervention, which should be avoided whenever possible. When a mausoleum, however, has deteriorated to the point where a partial rebuilding is required, restoration is appropriate. True restoration includes necessary documentation and research to determine the original appearance of the artifact, its structure, and the treatment required for restoration.

Cover: While the architectural significance of this brick family tomb is immediately apparent, a historical and cultural evaluation will also explain the origin and contextual significance of this style.

— Photo by Lynette Strangstad.

The context and physical setting of a burial ground are important from both a cultural and from a conservation viewpoint.

— Photo by Lynette Strangstad.



“Stabilization” refers to treatments executed to retain the greatest cultural and structural integrity of the artifact and the site overall, while offering a minimum of intervention into the historic fabric. In some cases it may approach restoration, although it generally does not include replacement of non-structural detailing. Most marker repair may be classified as either conservation or stabilization.

Understanding the Site

Before beginning restoration of a building, preservationists commonly research and document the building’s inherent significance, archeological evidence,

cultural context, physical setting, influence of the physical environment, relationship to the region, and intended uses after preservation. Similarly, before beginning preservation of historic burial grounds, the same factors must be considered. A thorough understanding of the nature of the entire site is essential to the preservation process; without it, the project may well fail.

Identifying Historical Significance

Local significance is nearly always apparent to those involved in preserving a burying ground. Sometimes regional or national significance becomes apparent as well. Perhaps the

burial ground is the only surviving reminder of an eastern-European settlement in a sparsely settled area of the Midwest; perhaps it is the burial place of the first governor of the state; perhaps a major Civil War battle was fought nearby and its fallen soldiers are buried there.

In other cases, however, discovering the significance may require diligent searching and a broader understanding of the surrounding area. A site may contain examples of a particular funerary style thought not to have been used in the area. It may contain surviving traditions such as grave goods, those cultural artifacts placed at the grave by certain ethnic populations. It may be important because it extends the known area worked by a particular stone carver. Stylistic similarities may be found which are comparable to European customs and reveal much culturally about the immigration of particular groups to the United States. Regional trade patterns may be traced by stone material native to one area but found in the cemeteries of another. Such subtle features as these require that all preservation work take place with the greatest caution to assure that no information is lost to future generations of researchers.

Identifying Archeological Significance

Archeological analysis of markers and other features of the site, sometimes called “above ground archeology,” reveals information regarding craftsmanship, materials, era, and customs. A brick pathway, for example, may be constructed of locally-made bricks but laid in a pattern common to 18th-century England. The markers themselves provide much information

Treading on Sacred Grounds

by Vennie Deas-Moore

Over a small graveyard alongside my family's church, Old Bethel AME, hover the spirits of my ancestors. African-American burial traditions in McClellanville, a small fishing village in South Carolina, still maintain the belief that at death, the physical body is lowered into the soil, but the soul/spirit remains among the living. This spirit must be satisfied and not disturbed. The belief goes on to say that these spirits hold an invisible circle of spiritual bonding with their family and loved ones. My mother often talks about how I was passed across the coffin of my grandfather. The belief was that since I was still a tiny weak soul, only a baby and the youngest of my family, my grandfather could come back and take me with him, causing my death at this young age. Passing me across broke that spiritual bond.

In earlier times a broken wooden wagon wheel was placed on the grave, breaking the spiritual links, so that the spirit would not tantalize the living. Today floral designs are arranged in the shape of a broken wheel. The yucca plant is frequently planted among the graves. This thorny bush makes it difficult for the spirit to freely roam about the graveyard. Sweet smelling plants are also found among the foliage. The dead are attracted to the sweet smell of the gardenia bush. One lady chuckles as she tells me, "I not too long dug-up a large gardenia bush out of my yard because it was drawing too many spirits to my house."

Immediately after death open vessels of water are emptied, so the roving spirit will not remain in the home. Broken plates, drinking containers, and utensils, items last used by the deceased, are placed on the grave sites. One may also find medicine bottles, furniture, cigar boxes, doll heads, and other personal items.

As you walk through the cemetery: Do not cross over the grave, walk around...Do not stand on top of the grave...Do not point at the grave or your finger may drop off...Do not remove grave goods or you will carry the discontented spirit with you.

The family plot is an important part of African-American family structure. As death comes, each member must be placed within the family plot, so that the family will remain together. This may mean bringing the body from miles away.

Some family plots are likened to gardens. The care of these plots is restricted to the family. It is the responsibility of the family to maintain the spiritual as well as physical continuity of the grave site. There is usually a grave keeper, but his responsibility is to maintain the overgrowth of the cemetery, taking care not to disturb the grave sites. Another important role of the grave keeper is to watch the cemetery against intruders.

Conservation of African-American cemeteries means "let it be." It is not unusual to find an African-American grave completely overgrown, especially when burials are no longer taking place. This does not necessarily signify neglect but is done so that the dead will not be disturbed.

Whether intentional or not, the coming of resort developers to the South Carolina coastline has erased many remote African-American burial grounds. The grave sites of slaves, remnants of the Southern plantations, have vanished forever without any records of their existence. An informant once told me that what once was her family's burial site is now a golf course. The opportunity for preservation is past, except for a few elders with memories of where their ancestors' physical bodies were once buried. As for the soul or spirits, who knows?

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regarding artistic and architectural styles of the period, as well as the cultural choices of the people who made them and of those who commissioned them to be carved. Additionally, ground-penetrating radar and aerial infrared photography can sometimes further archeological scholarship by identifying unmarked burials and other below-ground features without disturbing the soil.

Only professional archeologists sensitive to the requirements of historic burial sites and familiar with the burial customs and practices of ethnic groups should undertake below-ground archeological investigation of historic burial sites. Since any soil disturbance will also disturb the landscape surface, including relic plants, all landscape inventories must be completed prior

to beginning any archeological work. Shallow samples taken as part of a preservation project—perimeter samplings in conjunction with construction work such as the repair of a wall or fence, for example—may provide valuable information regarding earlier buildings or activity alongside the burial site. Likewise, shallow samplings within the burial ground can be

The level of artistic expression and sophistication available in a region at the given time is apparent in this gate detail of a weeping child.

— Photo by Lynette Strangstad.



used to locate lost burials or identify earlier walkways, walls, monuments, or buildings.

The excavation of burial sites for scientific investigation raises many moral and ethical questions. The conservative viewpoint holds that excavation of burials is acceptable only in cases of inadvertent discovery—human remains found in an otherwise unmarked spot during road construction, for example.

Such discovery should result in a respectful moving of remains to a suitable burial location. Most archeologists, however, feel that such discovery legitimately may be used for scientific inquiry.

While becoming less acceptable, it is still not uncommon for burials, particularly of paupers or ethnic groups including African Americans and Native Americans, to be unearthed and examined. Disturbing the burial places of their ancestors is abhorrent to most groups. For instance, the African-American tradition that firmly resists disturbing burial grounds or even visiting them survives to this day. Traditions such as these should always be respected when planning burial ground preservation.

Cultural Context and Physical Setting

Whether it is in a busy metropolitan area, near a factory in a small town, next to a tiny white church surrounded by cornfields, or in a neglected and forgotten wooded area, the burial ground's cultural context and physical setting are important considerations in preservation efforts. Is the burial ground on a flat, featureless plain? Is it bordered by tall pines or cedars? Or is there a profusion of mature vegetation enclosing the site? Is it a rolling, rambling, romantic setting straight out of a Victorian novel? Or is the setting severe, almost sterile, in its simplicity?

Although often beyond the scope of a preservation plan, the larger context provides information essential to fully understand the historical evolution of the site, to accurately interpret the site, and to plan for its future use. If the graveyard is bordered by a pine or oak forest, for example, these acidic trees have a potentially detrimental effect on marble and limestone markers. On the other hand, the trees could also provide some protection from a road or factory that produces pollutants even more damaging to these stone types. It is as inappropriate to remove the trees as it would be impractical to move the road or the factory, but both must be addressed in any preservation project.

In most cases little can be done to alter properties contiguous to a burial site, although occasionally circumstances may require action. For example, an owner may dispute the property line. Research and physical investigation can sometimes clarify original boundaries that may have become unclear over the years.

This is particularly important when the disputed area contains burials that are now considered to be outside the graveyard.

Changes to adjacent property may affect the burial ground even if no burials are directly threatened. Rerouting a nearby drainage ditch could damage the burial ground, or constructing a large building nearby could significantly alter the site visually. It is reasonable, appropriate, and in some cases, essential, to address these proposed changes by attending planning commission meetings, discussing problems with local government officials, and working with them toward a solution.

Features of the Site

Once the broad context of the site is understood, but before specific preservation planning can begin, it is essential to look within the burial ground to evaluate its features, including entrance gates and perimeter walls, ironwork enclosure gates and fences, masonry plot enclosures, vegetation, roadways and walkways, retaining walls, open spaces, buildings, early plumbing additions, water features, and the markers themselves. Each feature requires careful study in order to understand the site and develop a useful, comprehensive, and appropriate preservation plan.

Entrances. The entrance is the visitor's introduction to the graveyard. Whether elaborate iron gates or no particular defined entry at all greet the visitor, an important statement is made upon entering the site. Except for security or legal reasons, a simple site without perimeter fence, walls, or gates should remain so. Wrought iron, cast iron or early 20th-century

wire fences and gates may surround more elaborate cemeteries. Other sites may have walls of brick, stone, coquina, tabby, or wood. Each of these styles and materials provides significant information regarding historical period, available materials, representative culture, and craftsmanship. In addition, the perimeter may offer point of entry, security, boundary definition, and aesthetic statement.

Plot Enclosures. Within the burial ground, the variety of fences and other plot definitions and enclosures may reflect the sophistication of the site, the era in which it was most active, the availability of materials and craftspeople in various fields in different historical periods, individual expression, relative wealth of those buried at the site, and other historical, artistic, and demographic information.

Vegetation. Understanding the importance of vegetation to a site is essential to site preservation. A mature tree canopy is often a site's most significant organic feature and the one most important in creating its character. It is also an important historic feature, since in many cases trees were either planted as memorials, as part of the original plan, or perhaps as part of a much earlier restoration effort. In all cases, these are sufficient reasons to retain existing trees and mature shrubs.

Smaller vegetation, too, such as perennial flowers or ground covers, is significant historically and was often planted as a memorial. Traditional graveyard plantings include such evergreens as cedars, pines, hollies, and spruce; deciduous trees such as crape myrtles, oaks, and maples; shrubs such as lilacs and roses; and perennial flowers such as irises, lilies of the valley, and

How Siting Affects the Burial Ground

Mt. Moriah Cemetery in Deadwood, S.D. reaches skyward at a 40 degree angle. More than 100,000 visitors a year come to Mt. Moriah to see the resting place of such popular western legends as Calamity Jane and Wild Bill Hickok. Rapid water runoff and eroding or displaced soil, however, seriously threaten this popular tourist attraction. The slope and high altitude of the site along with rocky, poor soil restrict vegetative growth. In addition, stands of tall pines shade much of the site, offering a peaceful respite for visitors, but again, discouraging vegetation. Visitors, who ignore signs to stay on roads, further displace the soil and threaten the tenuous hold of remaining vegetation.

Water and soil, running rapidly downhill during spring thunderstorms, and more slowly during less frequent later rains, shift marker placement. Stones are occasionally tipped over or even carried across a road and deposited on the downward side of the pathway. Vegetation has difficulty getting started under such conditions, and roads parallel to the slope of the hill wash out repeatedly.

In Hope, Ind., the 19th-century Moravian God's Acre lies on a fairly open site on a gently sloping hill. Visitation is light. The uniform Moravian markers might best be described as a cross between the popular 19th century cradle form of marker in which individual graves are outlined with a stone coping, and the low box tomb, another popular form dating in the United States to the 17th century. These Moravian markers have half-slabs slanting slightly upward to allow for easier reading of inscriptions; the bottom half of the grave is enclosed with a marble or limestone coping. The portion within the coping is open, allowing for the planting of flowers.

In this cemetery, however, the clay soil and gentle slope, together with the unique marker construction, create serious deterioration problems for the markers. Because of the grade and poorly drained soil, water runs to the lowest part of the site and remains rather than being carried away. The markers with the slanted stone slabs funnel water runoff to a single point on each side of a given marker. This happens to be the narrowest place in the stone coping; it also carries the majority of the weight of the slab. Water runs down the side of this vulnerable area and settles at the bottom. Over the years, extensive deterioration of the marble sides has taken place in most of the markers, particularly those farthest down the hill. As with Mt. Moriah Cemetery, the siting of the burial ground is important, not only culturally, but also because of its significant impact on the overall fabric of the burial ground and the severe effect on the deterioration of the markers.

The earliest markers often contain the most valuable information and at the same time are the most vulnerable. This well-preserved wood marker dates to 1898 and is probably made of cypress.

— Photo by Lynette Strangstad.



peonies. Common succulents include hens-and-chicks, live-forever, and creeping sedums, and groundcovers commonly include periwinkle or English Ivy. In many cases, particularly in graveyards that have been untouched or neglected for considerable periods of time, early varieties of plants have survived at the site even though they are rare elsewhere in the landscape. Sometimes plants are the only markers found: they mark graves just as a gravestone does.

Roads and Walkways. Roads and walkways may have been formally laid out as part of the original plan, or they may be informal paths created by the traffic pattern of visitors. In sim-

ple sites, it is generally appropriate to retain that simplicity. Larger sites may have dirt, brick, or paved roads or walkways. They may be accompanied by gutters constructed of brick or stone, with several paving surfaces appearing in one site. In most cases these are passageways of longstanding and should remain and should be preserved in their original form.

Retaining Walls. Retaining walls are a significant feature at some sites and provide significant cultural information about materials, craftsmanship, individual expression, and style of a given era. Retaining walls also perform the very necessary functions of holding back earth on a

steep slope, preventing markers from toppling, and keeping buried remains in place. Sometimes, when retaining walls are viewed as a minor cultural feature, they are removed when they become a maintenance problem. The damage that results from their removal is significant: historical and cultural evidence is irretrievably lost, and physical damage to the site is considerable. Repair is far more costly than ongoing maintenance would have been.

Open Spaces. Open spaces are important features at historic burial sites and may indicate the location of previous structures, unmarked graves, or other features altered or lost over time. A limited archeological investigation may reveal evidence of a previous structure. In some open areas markers may have fallen and lie buried just beneath the surface. Open spaces may also indicate the earliest section of the burial ground, where markers were constructed of wood or other impermanent materials. A section may also have been set aside for a botanical garden but left unused. Often, an open space is actually a potter's field containing many unmarked graves. Grave depressions are sometimes evident in such areas. Even single unmarked grave spaces, whether they actually contain a burial or not, are historically a part of the site. Using, or reusing, open spaces in historic burial grounds for new burials is generally inappropriate and seriously jeopardizes the historic integrity of the site.

Buildings. Some burial grounds have buildings on them, most commonly a church or chapel, a receiving vault, or storage and utility buildings. Elaborate Victorian cemeteries may also have gate houses, administration



The extensive use and varied styles of these retaining walls contribute much culturally to the site, while their presence is a physical necessity.

— Photo by Lynette Strangstad.

buildings, public rest rooms, and other structures. In all cases, older structures are integral to the site and a part of its historical evolution, and their preservation is significant to the interpretation and understanding of the site. They require the same analysis by architects, engineers, conservators, and artisans that any other historic building would require.

Water Spigots. Water spigots were added to many cemeteries when plumbing became readily available. The original fixtures are important historically because they clearly show the date or period of this historic “modernization.” Changing attitudes toward cemeteries is evident in these additions, and they should be retained whenever possible.

Water Features. Nineteenth-century cemeteries, particularly garden style or rural cemeteries, often had added water features, such as ponds, streams, or possibly a small waterfall adjacent. These features are often central

aesthetically and may have been part of a formal design. They suggest much about the changing attitude in development on 19th-century cemeteries, which were created as places of repose, beauty, and tranquility.

Grave Markers. Grave markers are the most obvious feature of a site, the single feature most commonly identified as worthy of preservation. Most people recognize the significance of large stone monuments honoring prominent individuals, markers representing well-known historical figures, markers intricately carved by well-known artisans, and curiosity pieces to which bits of local folklore or other mystique is attached. However, these are only a few markers in the overall picture. In order to understand the history of the site and region, an understanding of the total assemblage of markers is essential.

Less understood, but often of even greater importance, are pioneer markers of early settlers

and other vernacular expressions, commonly of wood, shell, stone, or cast concrete, each of which is a unique expression lovingly placed by a family member or other mourner. In preserving a site, no marker is expendable or unimportant. Many, significant by virtue of their scarcity and cultural importance, may be overlooked, misunderstood or discarded by well-meaning individuals untrained in recognizing marker types and their significance. The grave goods found in African-American and other ethnic burial grounds are such examples.

Organizing a Project

Once the basic information regarding the broad significance of the site is understood, the next step is getting the preservation project organized. Logically, the work begins with recognizing the existing administrative structure governing the site. Often, it is

The Friends of Magnolia Cemetery

The Friends of Magnolia Cemetery in Mobile, Ala. exemplify one group's effort to organize and secure funding to preserve a historic burial ground. In 1980 the care of the 120 acres and 50,000 burials of Magnolia Cemetery was under the control of a private landscaping firm under contract with the city of Mobile. However, Magnolia, a cemetery dating to 1836, appeared overgrown and neglected.

In 1985 the Friends of Magnolia Cemetery, a nonprofit organization, was formed. In 1986, with the assistance of the Mobile Historic Development Commission, Magnolia was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Working with the city, in 1987 the Friends of Magnolia Cemetery bid on and received the maintenance contract; thus, the organization had a core operating budget. The city retained ownership and liability, which was covered under existing insurance policies. For the fledgling Friends of Magnolia to have attempted to insure the site separately would have been cost-prohibitive. The Friends of Magnolia hired its own permanent, full-time maintenance staff and began work in preservation planning, self-education, and research.

In addition to the maintenance contract, the principal source of income is derived from the establishment of a perpetual care trust fund. Individuals with family buried at Magnolia are offered perpetual care for a one-time fee equivalent to slightly more than \$5 per square foot of their plot. Also, many trusts held at local banks for perpetual care have been legally transferred, with permission of the families, to the perpetual care trust. The Friends may use 90 percent of the interest income for maintenance and restoration, leaving 10 percent as a hedge against inflation. Contributions from private foundations have gone primarily to specific restoration projects. Both the Alabama Humanities Foundation and the Alabama State Office of Tourism have funded publications.

owned by the county, municipality, or congregation. In some cases the current owners provide maintenance and serve a regulatory function. Sometimes the site is privately owned, perhaps a burial ground on private property (not necessarily that of the family buried there). Often the site is abandoned, falling within no apparent jurisdiction other than whatever state law may provide. When ownership is not appar-

ent, the county assessor's or similar office is a good place to begin tracing ownership.

Once the administrative agency has been determined, it is necessary to understand just what the agency can or will provide. Working with the existing body, perhaps offering services as a volunteer, is often the most productive approach. If the administrators show goodwill and good intent but simply do not have funding to adequately maintain a particular site, sometimes working with them and within their framework is enough, offering assistance in planning, expertise, and funding. When owners are unable to adequately care for the property, they may also be unprepared to work in depth with volunteers.

Building Consensus

The next step may be the formation of a support group, a nonprofit organization whose sole purpose is the preservation and protection of one or more burial sites. The "Friends of the Old Burial Ground" has the advantage of being nonpartisan, nonsectarian, and dedicated to one goal. In the cases of religiously-affiliated burial sites, taking the organization beyond the scope of the particular religious group makes the site eligible for state and federal funding for which it might not otherwise be eligible. In addition, alliances with other local groups can be mutually beneficial. Preservation, civic improvement and environmental groups, neighborhood associations, garden clubs, and other groups interested in land-use issues all may provide worthwhile associations. An early burial site in a given locality belongs to the entire locality, not just to the current owners of the property or the descendants of the area's first settler. Once the

site affiliation is taken beyond the specific restrictive association, the support organization can then work as a sponsoring agency for all preservation activities, working independently from, yet coordinating efforts with, the administrative body.

Once a support group has been established, complete with bylaws, board of directors, and elected officers, members need to define goals and strategies for the project. Usually, one of the earliest goals is to gather support by making people aware of the site, explaining what needs to be done, and encouraging people to feel that it is their problem and/or opportunity as well. The support group needs to publicize the significance of the site, the problems it is facing, the urgency of dealing with the problems, and the consequences of continued neglect.

A variety of techniques is helpful. Sometimes public meetings are effective, using speakers familiar with the local history of the site. Local news coverage emphasizing urgency and aims of the newly-formed support group may be very useful. Organizing tours of the site, distributing a walking-tour brochure, and involving community and school groups are other possible interim activities to broaden the interest base. As progress is made and publicized, additional members will be attracted to the group. Much can be done, however, even with an initial core group of dedicated individuals.

Funding

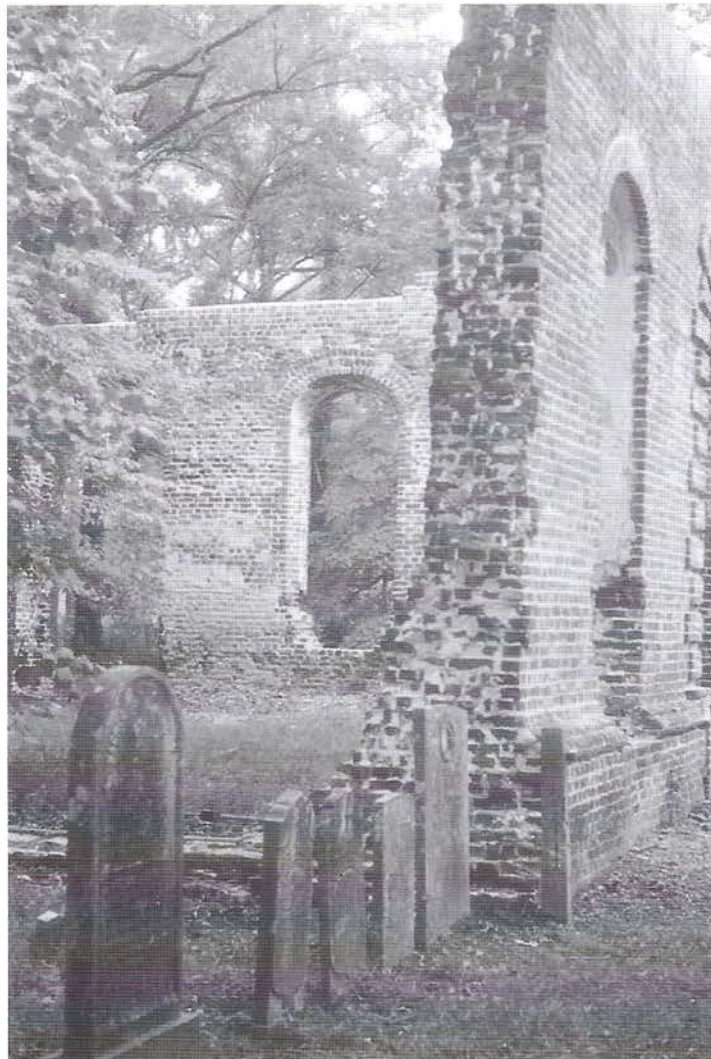
Obtaining funding is often one of the most immediate and difficult goals of the entire process. Currently no easy funding sources exist specifically for burial site preservation. Creativity is the operative term here; fund-raising

possibilities may be as varied as are the thousands of sites in need of attention.

Local fund-raising drives can be very effective if well-organized and sustained. Joining forces with one or more local or area historical or civic organizations can be useful, especially if an organization of longer standing has more fund-raising savvy and more clout with prominent members of the community than does the newly-organized support group. The Junior League, Jaycees, or local historical association may be powerful allies, for example. Such groups may have political strengths, organizational skills, or grant writing abilities that they may be willing to share in a joint venture. Likewise, area businesses are important in any local drive, particularly for an urban site. It is in the best interest of local merchants to have an urban green space that is pleasant and well maintained, making the downtown area a more inviting place to visit. It is also in their interest to show civic-mindedness and interest in the well-being of their community.

Local or community foundations are often able to offer small grants for projects that are in keeping with their objectives. Large corporations, too, particularly if they have a local office, are possible sources for funding. They may have foundations that award grants, or they may offer donations directly. They may also match or double whatever gifts their employees contribute.

The organization should also explore the possibility of in-kind services. A local garden center may be willing to donate supplies or plant materials. A printer may be willing to print a brochure free of charge. Such services can save an organization considerable amounts of money.



Evoking the romance of history past, the church ruin is the cultural feature that dominates this 18th-century burial ground.

—Photo by Lynette Strangstad.

Smaller efforts, such as an event held in the graveyard, are sometimes worthwhile as well. A carefully written and well-documented walking-tour brochure may be sold at a modest price, covering its cost and contributing to the fund-raising effort. More important, the brochure will provide much-needed community education and will also gain new friends for the project.

Historic Site Designation

Local or state designation as a historic site can also benefit a burial ground. It affords recognition, offers prestige, and, working as a public education tool, may also

offer some protection. Some state funds may be available. Most of these focus on the research and planning aspects of a project, with very little money generally available for actual construction, reconstruction, or conservation.

In addition, burial grounds may also be recorded as archeological sites with state archeologists. This process offers the advantage of integrating the archeologist into the planning processes, often providing an added ally toward preservation.

Getting the site listed in the National Register of Historic Places is difficult unless the cemetery is on the property of a

historically significant building or within the boundaries of historic district. The following National Register guidelines address cemetery eligibility:

Ordinarily, cemeteries, birthplaces or graves of historical figures, properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, structures that have been moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings, properties primarily commemorative in nature, and properties that have achieved significance within the last fifty years shall not be considered eligible for the National Register. However, such properties will qualify if they are integral parts of districts that do meet the criteria or if they fall within the following categories:

- a. a religious property deriving significance from architectural or historical importance; or
- b. a building or structure removed from its original location, but which is significant primarily for architectural value, or which is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a particular person or event; or
- c. a birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance if there is no other appropriate site or building directly associated with his productive life; or
- d. a cemetery that derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events; or
- e. a reconstructed building when accurately executed in a suitable environment and pre-

sented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other building or structure with the same association has survived; or

- f. a property commemorative in intent if design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own historical significance; or
- g. a property achieving significance within the past fifty years if it is of exceptional importance.

(National Register Bulletin No. 41, "Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places," see bibliography.)

While listing in the National Register does not guarantee a site any special favor, it does offer some protection against intrusion from federally funded or permitted projects such as construction of dams or highways. National Register listing may also enhance a site's eligibility for the state and federal grants available for preservation projects.

Working with Volunteers

Volunteer involvement is an integral part of the success of most burial site preservation projects. Volunteers often initiate the formation of a support group, and do the legwork and the research to develop goals and means of reaching those goals. Volunteers provide the enthusiasm, the energy, and the driving force behind most projects. Once a project is defined and underway, however, enthusiasm may wane as goals seem distant and all but unobtainable. People move away or develop other interests or problems, so there is often not a large, long-term association. Much responsibility falls to those faithful volunteers who see the project through from beginning to end.

Partly because of the nature of a volunteer staff, a coordinator of volunteers, preferably a paid position, is essential. The coordinator takes charge of all the varied talents and time schedules of the volunteers, sets timetables for goal accomplishment, assigns tasks, and follows up to ensure they are completed. This person keeps others informed and on track, and ensures that each participant understands the project and his or her part in it.

Once a formal plan is developed, volunteers can be instrumental in carrying it out. With only limited training, they can be the backbone of the work force for documenting and photographing many sites. The difficulty of these tasks is not to be underestimated. Documentation requires patience, accuracy, and good judgment. Thousands of dollars in wasted film and processing costs can result from an amateur photographer who was unaware of the sometimes complex light requirements in burial grounds.

Following more in-depth training, volunteers can undertake elementary conservation efforts such as washing or resetting certain types of markers. Make sure that each volunteer has received the necessary training for the particular task assigned. In no case should untrained or unskilled individuals attempt even elementary conservation work. Conservation processes are complex and often require skilled technicians familiar with historic grave marker conservation. Using unskilled or semi-skilled volunteers in such operations can cause irreparable damage to both the markers and the site.

Development of Workshops

Training workshops for volunteers and local personnel help keep costs at a minimum and as much work in-house as possible. Workshops (or one extended workshop) can train volunteers in skills necessary for such tasks as mapping, documentation, surveying, photographing markers, site maintenance, investigative probing for sunken or buried markers, stone resetting, and stone cleaning. A training workshop gives individuals the opportunity to gain experience in identifying problems they may encounter and hands-on experience in arriving at correct solutions. Sometimes the most valuable lesson learned is a clear understanding of what is best left to experienced professionals.

A training manual and video of the workshop will help train future volunteers and will also help to ensure that the original effort is not lost to techniques which deviate, more each year, from the standards set at the workshop.

Developing the Plan

A preservation plan is essential to preserve the historic integrity of the site, to protect it from unwarranted change, and to ensure knowledgeable stewardship. Such a plan emphasizes the need for continued research, landscape preservation planning, appropriate and thoroughly documented conservation, guidelines for routine maintenance, and regulations governing site management. The plan should cover funding, security, visitation, educational concerns, vandalism, and theft. It addresses both immediate short-term considerations, such as protecting the markers from mower damage, and long-term goals, such as continuing research.

Identifying Professionals

One of the first and, in many respects, one of the most important tasks in plan development is locating the right professional for each task. Preservation planners, historians, archeologists, arborists, horticulturists, botanists, landscape historians, historic landscape architects, cultural landscape architects, historic building architects, historic preservationists, historic sites engineers, soils engineers, structural engineers, geologists, cartographers, geographers, cultural geographers, historic sites researchers, historians, architectural conservators, fine arts conservators, restoration artisans, monument dealers, and others appropriate to a given site are all important to the success of a preservation project.

Professionals in these fields are not all alike. It is necessary to interview them, talk to some of their clients, and view their work. In many cases it is difficult to locate individuals within a discipline who are familiar with historic burial grounds and their special requirements.

Ask questions to determine if the individuals under consideration truly have the necessary expertise. Check with area or state historical organizations which may have used their services. Call the state historic preservation officer (SHPO) to see who that office has worked with or whether there is a list of recommended artisans, technicians, or firms. Talk to historic preservation architects and others who are likely to have worked with similar professionals in your area.

In many cases the first professional needed is a preservation planner to prepare the plan itself. An analysis of the site and determination of its needs by experienced and knowledgeable

Old Burying Ground

A preservation plan has been developed for the Old Burying Ground in Beaufort, S.C., dating from 1731. Under the direction of the Beaufort Historical Association, the organization responsible for the site, preservation planners specializing in historic burial sites prepared a detailed preservation plan. The consultants evaluated all past and ongoing activities and made recommendations for future care, provided guidelines for additional planning activities, and completed a conditions assessment. They recommended additional documentation and research, including a comprehensive marker survey, map upgrading, and a detailed landscape preservation plan. Consultants designed a program for marker conservation, a complex task due to the variety of marker types found at the site.

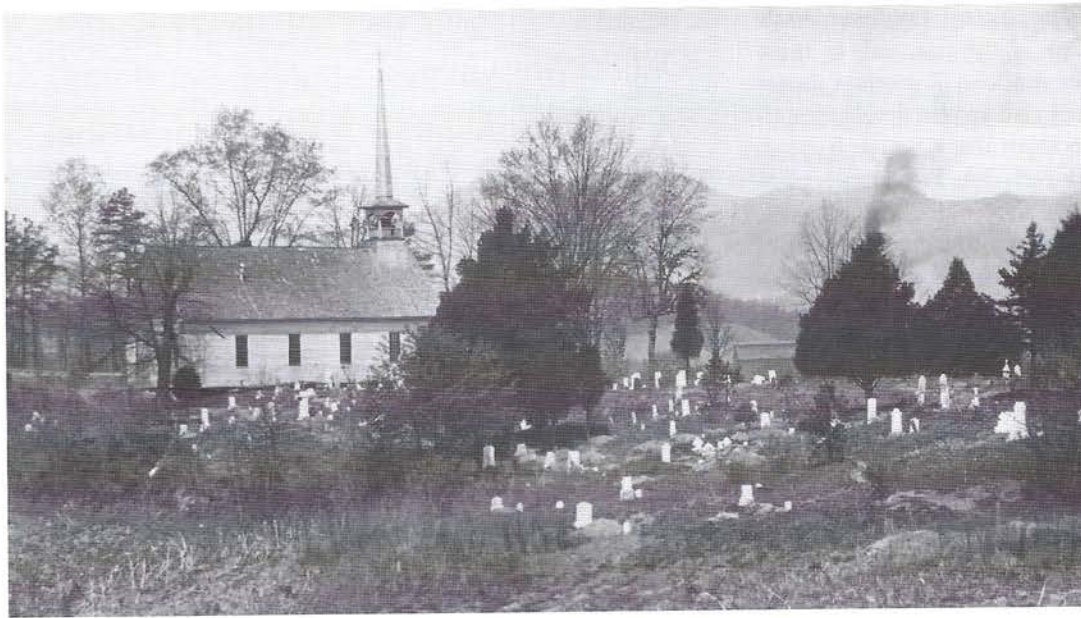
The plan also suggested further educational efforts and administrative changes, as well as developing work priorities and developing a work plan.

The master plan for the Old Burying Ground enables the association to develop an ongoing course of action rather than react to short-term needs. In addition, the plan will give future caretakers the opportunity to provide continuity in their approach to care.

planners can provide the best course of action and can safeguard the historical integrity of the burial ground. In the long run it will help to avoid costly mistakes and preserve irreplaceable resources.

Documentation and Surveys

Essential components needed to prepare the plan include a map, surveys, and evaluations. They are necessary for the historical record, for future maintenance and management considerations, and to plan conservation work. Without knowing what has gone before, it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine what should follow. For example, the understanding of marker significance depends to a great extent on research and documentation of



Early photographs can provide clues about the history of a particular site.

— Photo: National Trust for Historic Preservation.

the site. A marker type considered ordinary in one burial ground may have a considerably different significance if found in another burial ground in, say, another part of the country or dating from another time period. Likewise, information gained from research and documentation lends much to the understanding of landscape patterns, paths and walkways, and significance of vegetation. It is also frequently required for appropriate marker conservation. In most cases, trained volunteers can be a major part of the documentation process.

The Map. The first component of a thorough documentation of the burial ground is a good map that indicates the location of all features and grave markers by number, cross-referenced alphabetically by name. It also includes unmarked graves when known by grave depressions, cemetery records, or oral history (separate symbols are used for each type). Perimeter walls, walkways and paths, vegetation, plot enclosure walls, fences, and copings, as well as any buildings

or other features on the site are identified. Sometimes overlays are useful to delineate and clarify features at a complicated site.

Complex sites are better mapped by a professional cartographer. Sometimes a grant may be obtained for such work, or in-kind cartographic services can be identified. The geography department at a local university may agree to include mapmaking of a burial site in an existing internship program or as part of course work, or might recommend students who may be able to provide their mapmaking services at a reasonable fee.

Historical and Cultural Resources Evaluation. The evaluation should include a history of the site, cultural influences, changes to the site, and the significance of such influences and changes. It reflects the social history of the community as it is revealed through the cemetery. Utilizing community research opportunities (oral histories, family records) together with an examination of site features (materials, forms, spatial relationships)

and the relationship of the burial ground to the region, the historical and cultural resources evaluation adds to the understanding of the significance of the site. It augments the historical record and is used for determining priorities and establishing historical authenticity for all conservation work.

Typical research sources for burial site preservation include historical society/association records; church or synagogue records; business ledgers and old newspaper ads of monument dealers, stonecutters, and mortuary establishments; oral histories; and archival repositories such as university and state libraries and local public libraries. Libraries may contain probate records, estate records, property deeds and early maps, early photographs and newspapers, and family papers of individuals buried at the site.

Comprehensive Marker Survey. The marker inventory identifies and catalogues each individual marker. With training, volunteers can undertake the labor-intensive comprehensive marker survey. In addition to name, death date, and location, the style of marker is noted, along with material, condition, size, motifs, complete inscription, orientation, carver's signature (if any), type of plot enclosure, and vegetation. Footstones may be identified on the same survey sheet as the parent stone, or they may be documented on separate survey sheets.

Such information as material, size, condition of marker, and orientation is often overlooked as being unimportant, but is essential to any conservation program and augments information available in the photographic documentation. Orientation is particularly important in case the marker requires resetting or

other future conservation work. Once a marker is out of the ground or otherwise removed from its original location, the orientation is surprisingly easily forgotten.

Each burial ground has its own particular requirements, unique features, or other idiosyncrasies, and a survey form which is site specific will best provide the information most useful to that site.

Conditions Assessment. This survey analyzes markers based on materials and condition. A comprehensive assessment is based on a marker-by-marker analysis, while a preliminary assessment simply identifies and describes major conditions and problems at a given site. A good assessment addresses not only the mechanical deterioration problems found but also discusses the site and environmental factors affecting the markers documented. Trained conservators or artisans experienced in historic burial ground preservation should carry out such an assessment.

Photographic Survey. Skilled volunteers can complete the photographic survey of each marker and other features. In some cases, however, particularly when lighting is complicated, trained photographers may be preferred. Black and white film printed on archival quality paper is used to produce long-lasting documentary photographs. In addition, the processing should be done by a commercial or professional firm with high standards regarding archival processing. Chemicals used and processing techniques can have a major impact on the longevity of the prints.

One clear picture of each marker is usually sufficient. Additional photos are needed if there is carving on more than one face of the stone, the stone contains intricate motifs or a

carver's signature, or exhibits serious deterioration. Such photos should be taken concurrently with other photos both for convenience and to illustrate the condition of the marker at one particular time. Each photo should indicate both orientation (an arrow pointing north is most commonly used) and scale (a rule with large numbers next to the stone is effective). A series of panoramic shots provides landscape and context views of the site at the time of the survey.

Tree and Vegetation Survey. Together with its accompanying vegetation conditions assessment, the tree and vegetation survey is essential to identify and record all vegetation in the cemetery. Part of the historical record, it is used for maintenance and management. It is conducted by a horticulturist, consulting arborist, landscape historian, or preservation landscape architect familiar with historic plantings and with the preservation of landscaping in historic burial grounds. Sometimes urban foresters or county or university extension agents are able to offer needed guidance. It is essential that the professionals chosen for the survey are familiar with historical vegetation found in burial grounds. Many landscape architects, for example, are more familiar with planning than plantings and with modern hybrids than earlier varieties. Plants found in old burial grounds are varieties infrequently grown today. In addition, native wild flowers, grasses and other vegetation may remain from the pre-settlement terrain, particularly in sparsely populated areas.

The survey documents location, variety, size, age, and condition of plant species. It outlines general maintenance and recom-

mends treatment for the various foliage features of the site. It also recommends removal of invasive, weedy, or scrub vegetation and may contain notes as to the historic character of various plantings. Conduct the survey during at least three seasons: spring, summer, and fall. Some plants may be easily overlooked if the survey takes place in one season only.

Additional Surveys. Complete documentation of the site requires similar surveys of such additional features as buildings, statuary, mausolea, stained glass, ironwork, brickwork, plot enclosures, stonework, retaining walls, walkways, and roads. Surveys may also include water systems, faucets, fountains, bridges, ponds, chairs, and benches. Sites with buildings, mausolea, statuary, and ironwork, in particular, require separate surveys for these features in addition to the grave marker survey. While all these features are of equal importance to those listed above—and possibly of even greater importance in a particular burial ground—they cannot be dealt with at length in this booklet. These surveys include photographs and describe location, condition, style, motif, size, maker, architectural detailing and other information regarding these historically, culturally, and artistically important features.

Alternative Archeology

Although archeology is invaluable for historic buildings and sites, many traditional archeological techniques are often inappropriate in a burial ground. More and more, however, archeologists who wish to investigate historic sites without damaging them are relying on nonintrusive, remote-sensing technologies. While many of these techniques are still considered experimental,

and there is some discussion regarding reliability when used in the absence of traditional methods, in many cases the relatively high cost of these techniques is outweighed by the research and documentation value of their findings.

Technologies available include ground-penetrating radar, color infrared aerial photography, thermal infrared-multispectral scanning, and thermal resistivity. Commercial firms, universities, and the National Park Service are actively pursuing alternative archeology and may be able to offer advice and assistance.

Ground-penetrating radar has been used with great success at many early cemeteries and other historic sites. Surface readings of soil density to six feet deep and more enable an experienced operator to accurately identify cemetery boundaries, early burials, later vaulted burials, relative age of burials, occasional over-burying, underground streams, and other underground features in a totally noninvasive technique. In some instances, local utility companies or universities have ground-penetrating radar equipment and are willing to take part in a community research effort at little or no cost to the sponsoring organization.

The National Aerial Photography Program (NAPP), a division of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, photographs the entire country in five-year cycles. Even though these infrared photographs are fairly small scale, they are often detailed enough to show individual gravestones, are readily available, inexpensive, and can be helpful for mapping purposes. After studying the NAPP photos, an expert at interpreting infrared photographs can recommend whether or not a more

detailed survey would provide additional information. Features such as plot enclosures, fences, building foundations, below-grade foundations for funerary structures, paths and roadways, as well as unmarked graves and fallen gravestones that are buried just below grade may be revealed.

Intended Uses

In addition to safeguarding the past, preservation planning should address the proposed use of the site. While a vast Victorian cemetery may not be harmed by moderately increased visitation, the effects of additional visitors may be a primary concern at a small site. An urban or easily accessible site is more likely than a remote site to draw great numbers of visitors, and, therefore, more likely to be affected by visitation. A less prominent site, on the other hand, even after preservation efforts, may receive only light to moderate visitation. Obviously, massive grave markers such as mausolea in good condition are far less vulnerable to damage by visitors than are more ephemeral markers composed of wood, shells, or other vernacular materials. Such considerations are an important part of planning the preservation project.

If the burial ground is currently used for undesirable activities such as drug dealing or is a frequent target of vandals, planners need to address the situation and incorporate corrective measures into the overall plan.

Setting Priorities

Another aspect of plan development is establishing priorities for the site itself. At most sites, these include emergency stabilization and conservation.

Emergency Stabilization

Preparing a plan and getting it funded and underway is an involved and often time-consuming process. In nearly every case, areas of critical need require immediate attention before the overall conservation and restoration project gets fully underway.

Safety. Almost without exception, safety is the first consideration in the preservation of early burial sites. Any marker element found to be loose, dislodged, or leaning precariously, or any other condition perceived to affect visitor or marker safety requires immediate correction. A marker that has loose elements is particularly hazardous since it may appear stable but could be easily toppled by an unsuspecting adult or a child at play.

Before the larger project is underway, such structures can often be identified, photographed, dismantled, and stored on site. Volunteers or staff can move small to medium-sized markers, but if the structure is larger than staff or volunteers can safely move, the area should be marked off with barriers to keep visitors away. A sign indicating the vulnerability of markers and the potential danger some may pose to visitors is appropriate, too.

Legal Considerations. The legal implications of unsound markers is one of the emergency stabilization concerns. Since burial grounds are often popular places for strollers, joggers, and playing children, and are sometimes visited by tour groups and school groups, any condition that may result in injury may subsequently result in legal action against the stewards of the site. This, of course, applies to any condition present before as well as after conservation efforts.

Further, the condition may worsen when conservation work is underway and precarious markers are further destabilized during dismantling and rebuilding. Legal considerations should be addressed and clarified early in the project. Sponsors should be aware of the extent of their liability, whether or not a governing body such as the church or local government provides coverage, and have a clear understanding with contractors working at the site regarding insurance coverage and safety procedures while work is underway.

Landscape Stabilization. Even before the landscape preservation plan is complete, such landscape-related issues as drainage, badly deteriorated roads, failing retaining walls, or dead trees or limbs threatening markers may require attention. While it is not advisable to proceed without the proper professional advice, some carefully limited remedial work to correct a safety problem or to prevent a minor problem from quickly developing into a major one is sometimes necessary.

Developing Conservation Priorities

Once conservation needs are identified in the conditions assessment, the necessary treatments can be prioritized on a marker-by-marker basis. Scheduling the work depends on a number of factors, including conservation considerations, safety concerns, and relative historic significance. When all of these are identified and understood, conservationists can develop priorities, with safety considerations given a high priority. Sometimes a marker with a high rating in one area may have a low rating in another, giving it a moderate priority overall.

Conservation of features other than markers is part of a master

priorities listing with each feature given appropriate consideration. At sites where ironwork, for example, is of exceptional quality, much of its conservation may take precedence over stonework. The repair of significant retaining walls may be a top priority from both a safety and cultural point of view. Decisions such as these must be made on site on a case-by-case basis and formalized as an integral part of the preservation plan.

Developing Landscape Preservation Priorities

As with monument conservation, landscape preservation priorities begin with safety and emergency stabilization issues, development of the landscape preservation survey and conditions assessment, and long-term maintenance considerations. Additional concerns addressed in the preservation plan are site-specific.

Conservation

Finding conservation professionals can be difficult. Burial sites preservation or restoration specialists are rare, and professionals in related fields may be inappropriate for a given task. Just as one would not ask a drywaller to repair 18th-century horsehair plaster, it is important that a handyman or stone mason accustomed only to working with modern materials not undertake the repair of historic stonework.

Even in apparently straightforward cases or in cases which appear to require relatively minor repairs, it is essential that conservators, artisans, or masons experienced in historic preservation undertake the work. Materials, skills, and techniques required for conservation treatments differ markedly from those required for new construction.



Architectural or fine arts conservators, and some restoration artisans, stone and brick masons are likely to offer services appropriate to the repair of unsound or broken grave markers, ironwork, tombs, and mausolea.

Monument dealers are often qualified to reset large, complex markers since they may have the heavy equipment necessary to move large pieces of stone. However, since their specialty is the cutting and setting of new work, particularly granite and marble, they are generally not skilled in the exacting requirements of mending early, weathered, and fragile markers of sandstone, slate, limestone, and

Conservation requires the care and expertise of professionals.

— Photo by Lynette Strangstad.

marble. While some dealers have considerable interest and experience in early burial sites, others have little or none. They may feel that techniques used today are also appropriate to repair 18th- and 19th-century artifacts and, despite good intentions, may do serious damage.

It is essential that the project sponsor become familiar with the basic processes and appropriate materials involved in conservation work. In that way the sponsor can recognize both appropriate and potentially damaging techniques before work begins or a contractor is chosen.

No matter how little project sponsors may know about conservation, one important indicator in selecting a conservation artisan is meticulous work style. Other qualities to look for include well-executed examples of other similar work, sensitivity to the historic nature of the project, and concern for the safety of the piece being worked on as well as for other features in the immediate area. If the contractor has taken great pains in earlier work to make repairs as unobtrusive as possible and has cleaned up previous sites thoroughly after the work was done, it is likely the individual will take similar care regarding these and other details at other sites. While neatness does not take the place of knowing the right techniques, it is nevertheless a prerequisite to it and contributes significantly toward an acceptable repair.

Conservation of the various features of the site is a complex task that may require services of several different conservation professionals. An experienced brickmason may rebuild or repair a brick family tomb, for example, but may not know how to repair tablet stones. An ironworker will not repair white bronze. A stone-

mason who is expert in rebuilding dry-laid retaining walls may or may not know how to rebuild a 1920s family tomb. An architectural conservator may know how to deal with some of these, but not others. Therefore, a conservation coordinator may be necessary to integrate the efforts of various conservation professionals in order to assure the highest quality of work possible and to allow the project to proceed smoothly.

Undertaking the Field Work

Awareness of preservation principles underlying all conservation work is essential. The following principles do much to guide site work.

Determine the work required regarding each individual feature and the reasons for it. Determine cultural and historical significance, underlying deterioration problems, and proper procedures to be used to correct problems. All too often work begins on site before such preliminary information is fully understood, resulting in irreparable damage or loss. Taking the time to understand the work involved helps to eliminate avoidable losses.

Retain original form and fabric. This applies to the site overall as well as to individual markers and other elements. It is essential to the preservation of the site that as little change as possible take place. Altering either the grounds or the markers will seriously compromise the integrity of the entire historic site. Each monument or footstone, shrub or perennial, path or fencepost, however deteriorated or fragmented, is an integral part of the site and adds to the profile of the burial ground. Every effort should be made to retain and preserve all such material.

Use appropriate materials and techniques. Working with historical materials is very different from new construction and requires specific skills, knowledge, tools, and techniques appropriate to each circumstance. Correct techniques must be used in the stabilization and repair of each element in the burial ground. Appropriate materials and techniques will vary with each element and often with each individual stone, fence, or other feature. Failure to use appropriate techniques can result in irreparable damage and diminished historic value.

It is important to be aware of what techniques to avoid. Commonly-used, inappropriate, and damaging techniques include setting stones in cement, repairing broken markers with cement instead of the correct adhesive, using inappropriate consolidants and sealants, using inappropriate cleaning techniques, using adhesives and epoxies not meant for a particular stone type, and using modern mortars that are too hard.

Document all changes made. Much of the evidence of changes made in a good preservation project will not be apparent after a year, to say nothing of a hundred years. Documentation is a part of the historical record and integral to any responsible preservation program. Documentation prior to beginning work indicates the condition in which the feature was found. Documentation while dismantling any structure should record the process while also noting internal or original construction details. Documentation following completion outlines what work has taken place, what changes were made, if any, and why such changes were required.

Photographs throughout the process provide invaluable documentation.

Maintenance Procedures

Day-to-day, periodic, and long-term maintenance are essential components of a long-term plan to ensure the continued preservation of any burial ground. While groundskeeping personnel can carry out much maintenance on a regular basis, the responsibility for the cemetery's preservation and maintenance remains an obligation and concern of those in charge of the site.

Regular inspection and maintenance schedules for all features are part of the maintenance plan. Realistic budgets should include annual expenditures for long-term maintenance of both grounds and markers.

Marker Maintenance

Ongoing marker maintenance is one aspect of general maintenance. Periodic inspections will reveal damage or vandalism. Such incidents should be recorded as they occur, and when possible, efforts should begin immediately to rectify any problems. All vandalism should be reported to police and a damage amount determined by combining historical value and the cost of professional conservation and repair.

While mowing of the site is generally seen as landscape maintenance, unless the needs of the markers are met in the process as well, little purpose is served in trimming the grass. The well-being of the markers should always take precedence over routine grounds maintenance. Only mowing and other maintenance techniques that are totally non-damaging and non-threatening to the markers are appropriate in a historic graveyard. Caretakers must understand that it is the site itself they are caring for, with no aspect considered separately from any other.

Additional maintenance efforts include keeping markers free from debris and leaves, since these hold moisture and hasten deterioration. Likewise, removal of extensive moss and lichen will retard deterioration of markers. These can be removed either during a dry period when they will detach easily with a soft, dry brush or during a damp period when they can be gently sprayed with water and removed with a soft, moistened brush. Generally, this is a sufficient cleaning treatment. Additional cleaning may be unwarranted intervention.

Landscape Maintenance

Since a landscape is a growing, changing entity, its maintenance considerations are continual. A well-planned landscape maintenance schedule will include both long-term and short-term considerations. A short-term schedule may include mowing, removal of new scrub or weed growth, and removal and pruning of deadwood. Longer-term considerations include treatment of trees and plantings in need of special attention, possible introduction of appropriate ground covers both to protect stones and to simplify maintenance, and recommendations to ensure the long life of existing plantings, especially those that are a part of the site historically.

Routine considerations include use of nylon filament weedwhips around sound markers (rather than mowers, which cause serious damage), hand clipping around especially vulnerable markers, protection and care of existing perennial vegetation at grave sites, removal of vines and other foliage from markers, and removal of shoots or seedlings of new tree growth.

Cleaning Burial Markers

When to Clean

- Determine nature of soiling agents: Lichens, fungi, vines, and other biological growth obscure inscriptions. They may promote acidic surface conditions or actually feed on stone material. Carbonaceous deposits may cause gypsum to form.

Who Should Clean

- Cleaning is generally undertaken by conservators prior to stone treatment.
- Simple cleaning may be undertaken by maintenance personnel, plot owners, and volunteers following a brief workshop illustrating correct methods and materials.

How to Clean

- Unstable stones: Leave for a conservator or leave alone.
- Stable stones in good overall condition: Begin by flooding stone with clean, preferably filtered, water. Sometimes water alone or water and a soft-bristled brush is enough. If a cleaning agent is desired, use plain household ammonia diluted with water 1:4. Always complete the process by rinsing thoroughly with clean water.
- Gypsum may be removed with continuous extra-low pressure water application.

Avoid

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| • Cleaning sugary, cracked, split or otherwise unsound stones | • Sandblasting |
| • Muriatic acid | • Stone refinishing |
| • Household bleach | • Letter recutting |
| • Household detergents | • Paint |
| • Pressure cleaning | • Sealants |
| • Unidentified chemicals | • Metal implements |
| | • Biocides |

Use

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| • Rubber gloves and goggles | • Tongue depressors |
| • Nylon or tampico scrub brush | • Q-tips |
| • Cleaning solution of filtered water alone or plain household ammonia and water diluted 1:4 | • Spray bottles |
| | • Garden hose |

Remove by Hand

- Encroaching vegetation which keeps markers damp (trim historic vegetation; remove scrub vegetation)
- Vegetation in mortar joints or seams

Fertilizers and Biocides. Fertilizers, herbicides, and insecticides generally consist of acids or salts and other compounds which can be extremely damaging to most stone material used for early markers. Applied directly to stone markers, they can cause deterioration, especially to marbles and other calcium carbonate stones. In addition, some of these products, applied near markers, leach into the soil and travel through the moisture in the soil to the stone material, where damage occurs well after application. Fertilizers should be avoided as routine maintenance and should not be used at all around markers. If necessary, they may be used judiciously around selected shrubs, trees, and perennials. Lawns should be fertilized only under extreme circumstances, never routinely.

Herbicides, when used directly around markers, leave an unsightly brown ring of dead grass and also destroy any remnants of early plantings which may have survived only in these areas that are protected from mowers. Herbicides should never be considered routine maintenance and their use should be restricted to removal of such noxious plants as poison ivy or poison oak. Insecticides can be damaging to some markers and plants. They should be used only in extreme cases of infestation which are likely to disturb or injure people at the site. Indiscriminate spraying of fertilizers, herbicides, or insecticides should be avoided in all cases.

Irrigation. Irrigation systems found in some cemeteries are inappropriate in most historic burial grounds. Generally a late addition, irrigation systems alter the character of the yard. In addition, repeated applications of water keep stone material

moist, which may accelerate deterioration. A better solution—and one which is historically correct—is to determine what vegetation was found at the site historically and allow it to reestablish itself without benefit of irrigation, even if the result is a less-than-perfect lawn cover.

Accommodating Vegetation. When grave sites are disrupted by roots, it may be preferable to move monuments slightly (and document the change) to accommodate significant trees and other plantings; in other cases, in order to protect markers, vegetation should be removed. The determination of whether to move (or remove) the vegetation or to move the marker is made by evaluating the historic significance of both vegetation and markers, the degree of intrusion of one upon the other, and the degree of difficulty and amount of damage that may be done in altering either.

Early Plant Varieties. While recent scrub or weed growth that threatens stones or historic vegetation should be removed, great care should be taken not to remove early plant varieties. These may be rare historic relics that survive nowhere else. Today's roses, for example, are very different from those of 50 or 150 years ago. Although many old rose varieties are available today, many more are not, and such varieties may linger on in certain old burial grounds. This is also true for lilacs, irises, and many other historic plants. In addition, cemetery plantings are part of the historical record and require protection to preserve the integrity of the site. They may have been planted as memorials, often demonstrating the plant lore of the 1800s in which plantings symbolically repre-

sented the bereaved's attitude toward death or the deceased.

As is the case in routine maintenance, initial cleanup of an overgrown burial ground can result in much damage to historic plantings. For the reasons outlined above, then, the plant historian should be among the very first professionals involved in a burial site preservation project.

Mowing. Mower damage is one of the main sources of damage to early markers in a maintained burial ground. Since even the most careful groundskeepers will do some damage to many of the soft, early markers over time, at least two options should be considered. Both require some involvement by a plant historian or other historians and a thorough examination of the site in order to make an informed choice.

In most cases, historic burial grounds, at the height of their activity, were not closely mown as is commonly done today. The modern residential lawn is not an appropriate model for maintenance of early burial grounds. It is not historically correct, and it is detrimental both to the markers and the historic landscape. Thus, a relaxing of mowing standards is appropriate, and indeed essential, to the well-being of many of these important historic resources. In the early 18th century, sheep and goats were the main "caretakers" at many sites. While such grass trimming is not likely to be acceptable today, it is important to be aware of how burial grounds were maintained historically. When families took care of their own plots, it is unlikely that every family spent time every week in grass cutting at the burial ground. Until perpetual care came into prominence, burial grounds doubtless had a more natural, less trimmed

appearance. A return to such authenticity may be one of the best ways to preserve historic burial grounds. Many yards, particularly those that have not been regularly maintained for many years, may contain unidentified early plantings and are best left alone, with minimal mowing and minimal change in existing plantings.

In other cases, however, where plant historians determine that few original plantings remain, and when community standards do not allow longer grasses in a burial ground, ground covers can be used to reduce maintenance and lower the risk to stones from mower damage. Some ground covers may be historically appropriate, since they may have existed in the cemetery from an earlier date. The expanded use of early varieties of plantings still existing at the site is preferable. Again, it is the landscape historian who should examine the site to determine what ground covers may already exist at the site and what may be most appropriately added. Even increasing the use of existing ground covers risks destroying surviving relic plants, especially those found close to markers where ground cover introduction can be most useful in preventing mower damage. Thus, any use of ground covers must be approached with extreme care and sensitivity, as well as a thorough knowledge of existing plantings.

In some cases, particularly in high traffic areas where no early vegetation remains, introduction of newer plants may also be acceptable to reduce mower damage. Introduction or deliberate expansion of any plantings should be documented. When new ground covers are desirable, the use of small-leafed, low-lying

varieties which can thrive in existing conditions without fertilizers is important, since they require the least care and present the least risk of damage. Low-lying ground covers are necessary, since it is important to keep moisture away from stones and masonry as much as possible. Some vines, such as English ivy, attach themselves to stones and should be avoided, since they not only keep the stones moist, but, in many cases, actually feed on the stone material itself. Among the ground covers that may be suitable for various burial ground purposes are creeping phlox, creeping sedum, vinca (sometimes known as graveyard vine), and lily-of-the-valley.

Grave Depressions. Shallow depressions in old burial grounds often are actually grave depressions. While it is advisable to fill in sink holes or holes left by the removal of diseased trees, grave depressions should be retained. Often they are the only evidence of otherwise unmarked graves. Since no burial may be considered unimportant, information regarding each must be preserved, and care taken before altering any aspect of the terrain.

Ironwork Maintenance

To maintain existing ironwork, sound areas of the metal need to be cleaned and primed. Once iron surfaces are free of oils and grease, salts, dirt, and loose rust deposits, and the surface is allowed to dry, a rust inhibitor may be applied directly to rusted surfaces without sandblasting or extensive sanding. Elimination or reduction of the sanding step is cost-effective, since time is saved. It is also sound as a preservation policy, since as much as possible of the deteriorating iron is retained and re-adhered to the



sound surface. Other primers are also effective. Consult a good restoration ironworker to identify the most appropriate coatings for a given site. The question of whether or not to paint the ironwork, and what color, can be answered through careful research to determine what colors various structures may have been painted at the time of their construction. The state historic preservation officer may be helpful in finding a professional who can assist with paint analysis.

When existing ironwork structures such as fences are not complete, a preferred preserva-

This fine 19th-century cherted walkway with original brick gutters has been preserved through careful maintenance, although others at the same site have been paved over. Historic fabric that does not meet modern needs for durability is always at risk.

— Photo by Lynette Strangstad.

Preserving Plants in Historic Burial Grounds

Plants are an essential part of every old burial ground and deserve the same respect and care as any other historic artifact. In many burial grounds, scraps of pre-settlement vegetation survive. In most, mourners and caretakers have added favorite plants. Those surviving today create a living document that tells of local history, garden fashion, ethnic influences, and cultural change. Every plant lost diminishes the document and our understanding of the past.

These plants may also be great rarities. Old burial grounds have yielded roses and other living antiques once thought lost forever. To an untrained eye an overgrown lilac may seem identical to those at local garden centers—and therefore expendable or easily replaced—but a plant historian may recognize it as something distinct and rare. Even some weeds are historic plants; black locust seedlings may be descendants of trees that ringed a cemetery years ago. Plants can be amazingly tenacious. Until proved otherwise, therefore, consider each plant an irreplaceable bit of the historical record and an endangered species.

How to Find Historic Plants

Relic plants are often overlooked because they grow unobtrusively and in unexpected places. Getting down on hands and knees can be enormously revealing. Search first at the base of the marker—front, sides, and back. Even if the grass is trimmed right up to it, look carefully; peonies and other plants can survive for years when mown to grass-height. Search apparently-empty lawn, under overgrown shrubs, and at the base of trees. Search the perimeter of the burial ground, especially just outside any fence, and near the refuse pile. Escaped or discarded plants often survive there in benign neglect. Search through the year to discover bulbs and plants that go dormant. Map and describe everything found.

How to Protect Historic Plants

Most important is an informed attitude. When plants are regarded as historic artifacts and endangered species, half the battle is won. So spread the word.

Modern maintenance is perhaps the greatest danger to relic plants. Attempting to meet suburban-lawn standards while cutting costs, many cemeteries mow and weedwhip brutally, destroying historic plants. Weed-killers eradicate those that have escaped into lawns and are especially destructive at the base of markers.

Unfortunately, graveyard preservation poses other dangers. “Clean-ups” often sweep far too clean, and marker conservation work may damage plants. Rather than removing shrubs to protect markers, prune judiciously or dig and move them a few feet. As a last resort, take cuttings to replant. Changes in the micro-climates in old burial grounds can cause problems also. Trees and shrubs mature, for example, shading once sunny spots. Though some changes can be moderated, at times it may be necessary to relocate a plant.

It may also make sense to re-establish plants that survive only as escapes, or to increase the numbers of a threatened plant. In any rescue however, keep in mind that no matter how endangered a plant may seem, it has long survived as is. Intervention often leads to extinction. Moving or increasing a plant also changes the historical record, so use discretion, and document.

Collecting seeds is the least damaging way to propagate. To reproduce a plant exactly, however, take cuttings or dig a tiny piece, leaving most in place. Never jeopardize the continued life of the original plant. Avoid introducing new plants into old burial grounds, since it alters the historical record, and new may grow to overwhelm the old.

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tion solution is to repair and maintain the remaining work rather than add historically incorrect substitutes.

Road and Path Maintenance

Roads and paths, particularly in 19th-century cemeteries, are often a key feature in articulating the cemetery's landscape design, and their preservation and maintenance are essential.

Such preservation includes maintaining existing widths and contours, small triangles or small circles often found at intersections, and the original paving surfaces. Brick gutters should be maintained rather than ignored or eliminated. Introduction of asphalt for the convenience of modern vehicles seriously alters the site and erodes its integrity. To preserve certain existing roadways, traffic can sometimes

be limited to pedestrians only. Replacement of original crushed stone or early brick with new brick pavers or other paving materials likewise compromises the site. If brick was the original material, roads or paths should be resurfaced with as much of the original brick as possible and reproduction brick that matches the original in color, size, texture, and strength. When a custom-made brick is required,

restoration brick firms generally have little difficulty in producing good replica brick. Brick and gravel paths and roadways need regular maintenance. Especially important are the monitoring and repair or correction of erosion problems.

Adapting for Current Uses

Because tourists and other interested persons are among the most common visitors to burial grounds, minor adaptations to accommodate them, such as benches and trash receptacles, can accommodate the burial site as well. In Victorian cemeteries, cast iron benches and cast iron or wire trash receptacles might be appropriate at strategic points. At an earlier, simpler burial ground, such accommodations are best left outside the burial ground near the entry. Placement and choice of these elements require careful consideration. A plastic industrial drum with TRASH painted on it is not acceptable in any historic burial ground.

Urban Green Spaces

Uses beyond tourist visitation are important, too, and probably essential to the survival of many sites. Burial grounds are typically visited by genealogists, history buffs, and people interested in gravestone carvings. In urban areas, cemeteries and earlier burial grounds provide open areas that offer urbanites the tranquility and respite found in tree-lined, grassy areas. Delightful places for strolling or birdwatching, burial sites also serve as minor habitat for wildlife, particularly small creatures such as birds and squirrels. Some 19th-century cemeteries also serve as botanical gardens. Such uses are very much in keep-

ing with the original intent of the site and serve today's public admirably as well.

Signage

Signage is an important aspect of the visitor's perceptual experience of the site. Signs should be uniform throughout the site and should reflect the style of the era most appropriate to the burial ground. In most cases, simple, clear, unobtrusive signs are best suited to burial grounds and wherever possible should be limited to the entryway. The use of signs throughout the site is disruptive and also compromises the site historically, unless signs were placed originally at a very early date in the site's history. In many cases, a style similar to that used by the National Park Service at its historic sites is most appropriate: effective, simple, and clear.

Content of signs is primarily informative. Sometimes a map at the entryway can effectively direct visitors to points of interest. Historical information for background is also useful. In addition to providing visitor information, signs can also state regulatory policy. In some cases, a direct statement of what is or is not allowed is appropriate. Often, however, a positive approach which involves visitors and asks them to take a personal interest in the site is more effective. Remind visitors that the site is both historic and sacred ground that deserves care and respect. A note here about the fragility of the site may be appropriate as well.

Regulations

Regulations apply primarily to visitors and delineate appropriate behavior, hours of operation, and acceptable maintenance proce-

dures. Site regulations might open the yard at 8 or 9 a.m., closing at dusk. A notice that trespassers during closed hours will be prosecuted may aid police monitoring the site to reduce vandalism.

Gravestone rubbing should be strongly curtailed or eliminated due to potential damage to markers. Irreparable and significant damage has commonly been done by people who thought themselves to be both careful and knowledgeable. In addition to the damage caused by pigment residue, most visitors are not able to accurately distinguish between sound stones and unstable ones. Because of the potential damage, rubbing is best avoided altogether.

It is essential to the well-being of the burial site, for legal clarity, for proper site maintenance, and for permanent archival records that any governmental body with jurisdiction over an active burial ground enforce an existing ordinance or, if necessary, implement a new one to record all new burials in all cemeteries under its jurisdiction. The burial record includes, at a minimum, the name, location (mapped), and date of the proposed burial. Obviously, no burials are allowed in otherwise claimed spaces. A permit to bury, issued following proof of ownership of the proposed grave space, should be required at the site before a burial can take place. Such records, appropriately maintained by the city or county and upheld with mutual cooperation between the governmental body and the burial site administration, bear the force of law.

Other regulations appropriate to effective management and care of the site should also be developed. Regulations are generally site specific and may vary greatly from one site to the next.

Additional Activities

Other current uses, particularly of the larger Victorian sites, include organized activities such as tours, holiday and memorial observances, community picnics, fund raisers such as walks or runs, and more. Such activities, when managed by informed, sensitive groups in charge of the site, can add much to the modern use of cemeteries without damaging the site. Such expanded use of burial grounds is desirable both to the site (well-visited sites are less subject to vandals and derelicts than are less visited sites), and to local residents. Such activities welcome individuals to the site who may not otherwise come to know and appreciate burial grounds, create a vested interest by individuals in protecting and promoting the site, and broaden the base of supporters who may be willing to speak up either when inappropriate changes are proposed or when much-needed funding is required. In the long term, preservation of historic burial grounds is impossible without the broad-based interest of the general population. Carefully managed, many activities in our early burial grounds can benefit both the historic site and its modern-day visitor.

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Resources

The Alliance for Historic Landscape Preservation is the leading national organization of professionals dealing with the preservation and conservation of historic landscapes. For more information contact: Alliance for Historic Landscape Preservation, 82 Wall Street, Suite 1105, New York, NY 10005.

The American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works offers assistance in locating conservators who work in fields related to burial grounds. For more information contact: American Institute for Conservation of Historic & Artistic Works, 1717 K Street NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20006, (202) 452-9545 aic@stanford.edu

The Association for Gravestone Studies is a nonprofit organization founded to further the study and preservation of gravestones. It has a number of publications and operates a clearinghouse of information related to burial ground preservation. For more information contact: Association for Gravestone Studies, 278 Main Street, Suite 207, Greenfield, MA 01301 (413) 772-0836 Info@gravestonestudies.org.

The Association for Preservation Technology publishes a directory that may be useful in locating professionals who may assist with burial ground preservation projects. For more information contact: Association for Preservation Technology, The Association for Preservation Technology International, 4513 Lincoln Ave., Suite 213, Lisle, IL 60532-1290 (630) 968-6400 information@apti.org

The Center for Historical Cemeteries Preservation (CHCP) promotes the study, documentation and preservation of historical burial sites in the southeastern United States and the Caribbean. CHCP provides workshops, publications, educational programs, and consulting services to assist individuals, agencies, and organizations with cemetery studies and restoration efforts. CHCP also does restoration project management in association with conservators and artisans skilled in the conservation treatments required for cemetery preservation. CHCP also organizes surveys and trains volunteer surveyors in appropriate recording methods. For more information call the center at (850) 877-9014.

Center for Thanatology Research operates a nonprofit library and research center. It also provides mail order book sales with many titles related to graveyard preservation. For more information contact: Center for Thanatology Research, 391 Atlantic Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11217 chicora.org.

Each state has its own State Historic Preservation Officer, a liaison between the state government and its citizens regarding historic preservation matters in that state. They may provide information and technical assistance. For further information, contact the officer in your state or the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers, Suite 342, Hall of the States, 444 North Capitol Street NW, Washington D.C. 20001-1512, (202) 624-5465.

The National Park Service, Heritage Preservation Services, offers publications, workshops, technical assistance, and national policy direction to provide a critical base of information for a diverse audience. These materials provide the tools necessary to accomplish wise preservation practice on a variety of landscape resource types nationwide. For more information contact: Heritage Preservation Services, National Center for Cultural Resources, National Park Service, 1201 Eye St, NW, 2255, Washington, D.C. 20005, Telephone: (202) 513-7270 www2.cr.nps.gov.

New York Landmarks Conservancy has a Religious Properties Program that publishes a newsletter, *Common Bond*. For more information contact: New York Landmarks Conservancy, 141 5th Avenue, New York NY 10010, (212) 995-5260 nylandmarks@nylandmarks.org

Partners for Sacred Places is an information clearinghouse that promotes good stewardship of America's historic religious properties. It publishes a newsletter and maintains a network of preservation and restoration resources. For more information contact: Partners for Sacred Places, 1700 Sansom Street, 10th Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19103, (215) 567-3234 partners@sacredplaces.org

Saving Graves is a website dedicated to the protection, restoration, and preservation of endangered cemeteries worldwide, is a completely free-access online resource that provides to its visitors a wide assortment of preservation information and records. For more information contact: Saving Graves, 5950 Western Hills Drive, Norcross, GA 30071. www.savinggraves.org.

Acknowledgments

Lynette Strangstad, author of *A Graveyard Preservation Primer*, has specialized in the preservation of historic burial grounds since 1980. Through her company, Stone Faces, based in Mineral Point, Wisconsin, she has served as burial ground consultant and conservator at sites throughout much of the United States. She also served as consultant to the National Trust Southern Region's Burial Sites Protection and Management Project and frequently speaks and writes on burial ground preservation.

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Sample Survey Sheet for Individual Burial Markers

Recorder: _____
Date: _____

Name of Burial Ground: _____ Marker Number: _____

Contact Person: _____ Other I.D.: _____

Marker Orientation: E SE S SW W NW N NE

Name/DDate: _____ Photo Number: _____

Dimensions: _____ high _____ wide _____ thick

Marker Type: ☐ tablet ☐ tablet-on-base
☐ foot ☐ box
☐ table ☐ obelisk
☐ tomb ☐ mausoleum
☐ cradle ☐ grave depression
☐ statuary ☐ barrel vault
☐ monument ☐ grave
☐ goods ☐ plaque
☐ modern flat
☐ other: _____

Severity of Condition: (least) 1 2 3 4 5 (most)

Causes: ☐ settling ☐ weathering
☐ vegetation ☐ paint
☐ graffiti ☐ vandalism
☐ other: _____

Previous Repair: ☐ cement ☐ adhesive
☐ iron pins ☐ iron braces
☐ stucco ☐ mortar
☐ rebuilt ☐ encased
☐ coatings
☐ other: _____

Material: ☐ marble ☐ limestone
☐ brownstone ☐ sandstone
☐ slate ☐ granite
☐ dolomite ☐ fieldstone
☐ cast stone ☐ brick
☐ stucco ☐ white bronze
☐ iron ☐ wood
☐ pottery
☐ other: _____

Enclosure Type: ☐ none
☐ iron/wood fence
☐ brick/stucco/stone wall
☐ brick/stucco/concrete/stone coping
☐ vegetation
☐ other: _____

Motif(s): ☐ death's head ☐ soul effigy
☐ fraternal ☐ portrait
☐ clasped hands ☐ open book
☐ dove ☐ lamb
☐ cross ☐ floral
☐ cross and crown
☐ urn and willow
☐ other (describe): _____

Vegetation: ☐ none ☐ shrubbery
☐ trees ☐ ground covers
☐ bulbs
☐ other (species, variety or describe): _____

Maker's Signature: _____

Complete Inscription: ☐ inscribed ☐ raised
☐ painted
☐ other: _____

Condition: ☐ sound ☐ sound but lying on the ground
☐ cracked ☐ eroded
☐ broken # of pieces _____
☐ sunken/tilted ☐ flaking
☐ delaminated ☐ voids/losses
☐ stained ☐ moss/lichen
☐ structure of footing unsound
☐ other: _____

(on back of survey form, copy exactly as found on marker)