

A Guide to the Preservation of Burial Grounds in New Hampshire

2018 edition
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New Hampshire
Old Graveyard Association

<http://www.nhoga.com/>

<http://www.nhoga.org/>

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I. Forward

The *New Hampshire Old Graveyard Association* was founded in April 1976 and incorporated in April 1977. Our mission is to promote knowledge of New Hampshire history by bringing together people interested in old graveyards; to foster interest in the discovery, restoration and maintenance of these graveyards; and to preserve records and information which relate to them. These burial grounds are an integral part of our history and an important primary resource for genealogists, historians and scholars of New England's cultural history. Over 4300 family burial grounds are mapped and recorded on our website: <http://www.nhoga.com/>.

The State of New Hampshire defines a burial ground as " a private family or religious institution's cemetery, mausoleum or columbarium on private property and not available for use by the public" (Title XXVI Chapter 289:1). A graveyard is an older burial ground, the latter term used originally by the individualist Puritans to indicate land set aside for burials on private ground, not land mandated for such a purpose by the Church.

A note on terminology: Historically, the word graveyard was a Puritan term and described a plot of land where family or community members were interred. The use of the term cemetery was a Victorian innovation. Cemetery comes from the Greek word for sleep and dovetailed with the Victorian penchant for describing death as an eternal sleep. Typically, the term graveyard is used now for older burial grounds, while cemetery is used to refer to modern, public sites. For the purposes of this guide we use the terms graveyard and grave-site as general terms to describe any burial ground regardless of size, location or inhabitants. We use the word plot to describe a piece of land that contains multiple graves and lot to describe a single burial place.

This guide, based mainly on member experiences, was first published by NHOGA in 1985 under the name Graveyard Restoration Handbook, and revised as A Guide to the Preservation & Conservation of Graveyards in 2004. This 2018 revision, A Guide to the Preservation of Burial Grounds in New Hampshire, contains most of the 2014 guide, with updates for the growth in social media, the resources available on the Internet and changes in terminology and the law, including a petition form to gain legal status for burial ground preservation..

II. Purpose

The purpose of the guide is to promote best practices for identifying, recording, maintaining and preserving burial grounds (also called family graveyards) in New Hampshire. A graveyard is an older burial ground. There are many challenges involved in graveyard preservation. The grounds may be overgrown with brush. Markers may be leaning, broken or vandalized. Many stones are succumbing to acid rain, harsh New England weather and age. In addition, family members may be widely scattered, making it more difficult to secure permission or funding for maintaining the burial ground. Nonetheless, it is critical that these grounds be preserved, as the epitaphs on the stones may well be the only source of primary documentation recording a person's life and death. In many cases, this valuable information has been irretrievably lost. Restoration, recording and maintenance of local graveyards is a form of historical preservation.

In addition to providing invaluable resources for genealogists and historians, old gravestones also serve a cultural interest. Changes in the type of stone used and the symbolic icons engraved on the stones reflect changes in religious and social attitudes of their times. The slate stones of colonial times are now recognized as fine examples of folk art. Victorian monuments often include finely carved artwork and

statuary. Although epitaphs may be stock verses, they may also make personal statements about the men and women they memorialize.

Gravestones also promote tourism, encourage learning and protect our open spaces. We encourage people to explore roadside graveyards, or join the many local historians who offer tours. We ask that these old burial grounds be treated with care. Please stay on the paths if there are paths available. Do not touch the stones or attempt to take rubbings--old stones are fragile and easily damaged. Do not litter. Your effort to treat these burial grounds with respect helps preserve our cultural heritage.

III. Legal Issues

Graveyards may be found on either publicly or privately owned land. Though this guide provides some guidelines, we encourage you to explore the State of New Hampshire Revised Statutes Annotated (RSAs) <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/xxvi/289/289-mrg.htm> and to work with property owners, local selectmen and cemetery trustees before starting on any type of restoration or preservation project.

Here is a copy of RSA 289:14-a **Maintenance, Repair, and Preservation of Burial Grounds**, enacted in 2012: "*Any person or organization interested in caring for a burial ground which has not been maintained and the owner of which is unknown, or whose present address is unknown, may petition the selectmen, town council, mayor, or cemetery trustees for permission to clean, maintain, restore, and preserve that burial ground at the person's or organization's own expense. Upon approval of this petition on any conditions deemed appropriate, including the permission of the owner of the surrounding property, the selectmen, town council, mayor, or cemetery trustees shall require the person or organization to place an advertisement in a local newspaper providing notice that the burial ground is to be entered and that work is to be done, and notifying persons with a property interest in this burial ground who have objections to come forward by a date certain*".

Commonly asked questions about legal issues:

Who is responsible for the care of a family graveyard when the family is scattered, or no longer extant?

Maintenance is required only for burial grounds that have established trust funds. There are no laws compelling either the community or the property owner to care for an unfunded burial ground. Conversely, if the cemetery is not specifically under the care of either an individual or the community, neither has the right to uproot the markers, graves, or fencing.

A town may vote funding for the care of an "abandoned" graveyard, as spelled out in RSA 289:4. In this case, the funds must be expended under the direction of the selectmen or the cemetery trustees. Should an individual or community have an interest in preserving a burial ground on private land, the interested party must have the landowner's permission and comply with RSA 289:14a. If the burial ground is on public land, the interested party must have permission from the selectmen or cemetery trustees. Descendants have the right to maintain burial grounds, as does the town if the burial ground has been abandoned. It should be remembered that a graveyard is a form of permanent land use. Any work at these burial grounds by individuals or the community is a form of adopting care on behalf of the family.

Are family members responsible for the burial ground's upkeep?

Families may be scattered or no longer extant. If family members are still extant, they have the right to care for the burial ground, but they cannot be compelled to maintain it.

Does an individual have the right to be interred in a family graveyard that is on private property?

In the case of a deeded lot or plot, the owner has the right to determine who can be buried on the burial ground. If the original grantee is deceased, RSA 289 provides guidelines for determining ownership. These RSAs <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/xxvi/289/289-mrg.htm> may be found at your local library or the New Hampshire State Library. If no deed exists, the legal issues

may not be clear and may need to be determined by a court of law.

What if I want to visit a graveyard on private land?

Though descendants have a perpetual easement allowing them access to the graves, access to a graveyard on private land may still pose a problem. This is especially true in the case of a rear location where the burial ground can only be reached by crossing private property. In this case, even descendants must have permission from the owner of the surrounding property. In the rare instance that this permission cannot be obtained, the selectmen may issue a permit for a temporary right of entry. Our members have never been refused access.

IV. An Introduction to Preservation and Conservation

Preservation efforts attempt to reduce damage due to age, handling, or outside elements. For our purposes, conservation means restoring an artifact to its original condition and not the subject of this guide. Because gravestones are historical artifacts, a professional conservator should, ideally, do any conservation or preservation. However, volunteers and non-professionals can safely do simple repairs. Here are the primary things to know before you attempt any kind of work.

1. Gravestones are irreplaceable primary source documents. Thus, the less tampering you do with them the better. Protect the original historic value and integrity of the stone by altering it as little as possible.
2. Gravestones of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries are extremely delicate. Damage is easy to do, difficult to undo.
3. Inappropriate cleaning techniques, such as the use of bleach to clean a stone, weaken the stone and shorten its lifespan. This damage is not always immediately apparent. In terms of preservation and conservation, it is better to do nothing than to do the wrong thing.
4. Before beginning any preservation project, take time to research the project. This will ensure that the project is completed in a manner best suited to both the stones and the burial ground itself.
5. Ideally, any repairs should be done using reversible techniques, allowing the use of better techniques as they are developed in the future.

Getting Started

One of the most commonly asked questions is: How do I begin a preservation or conservation project? A good way to start is by documenting the burial ground. First determine if any prior documentation has been done. If so, these records may have been deposited at the local library, historical society or town hall. There may also be a copy at the New Hampshire Historical Society, the New Hampshire State Library or the New Hampshire State Archives. It would be unfortunate to duplicate work that has already been done. However, all prior transcriptions should be verified for accuracy and completeness. The internet site findagrave <http://www.findagrave.com/>, although it does not yet have as many burial grounds identified in New Hampshire as NHOGA, includes many photographs and the names of those interred.

Before beginning any restoration, preservation or maintenance, you need to try to locate any descendants, as required under RSA 289:14a. If no relatives or descendants can be found, you must obtain permission from the authorities e.g., Selectman, Town Council, Cemetery Trustees or Mayor, before any cleaning or preservation work is started. A petition form is contained in Appendix C herein.

Another important consideration is the issue of continued maintenance of the burial ground. Will volunteers be able to sustain this work, or can the town vote funds? Is there a possibility of trust funding from a relative?

Prior to beginning the work, it is also important to notify the local police so they will not consider your work vandalism. The nearest neighbors also need to be informed, or they may call the police. Newspaper publicity can aid in explaining your project to the community. Whether the work is done by an individual, or as a community project, it is critical to work with the community and within the law. We stress the importance of research on the best methods to restore old graveyards and the stones they contain. Though non-professionals can do good work, it's critical to understand and use best practices. Poor restoration methods can be extremely detrimental to the life of the stone.

Finally, some towns or individuals may elect to consult with or hire a professional conservator

regarding gravestone repair. Identifying a reputable and knowledgeable professional can be a challenge. Good guidelines for this can be found in [A Graveyard Preservation Primer](#) by Lynette Strangstad. In New Hampshire, one may also contact the Division of Historical Resources for advice (see Section V for their contact information).

Documenting Graveyards

Documenting a graveyard is one way to preserve the information contained there. This is best done using inventory forms and photographs and recording your results on findagrave and/or NHOGA. Using standardized forms ensures that the information gathered is accurate and complete. One of the biggest problems we've experienced is that many of the graveyard inventory projects previously done are missing vital information such as epitaphs, type of stone, and location. We have also worked with many records that were alphabetized by surname rather than by burial location. This makes it difficult for researchers to locate the burial ground. In addition, this may obscure the relationship between family members with different surnames. To avoid this problem in the future, the New Hampshire Old Graveyard Association has developed a cemetery survey form and monument survey form to aid in the gathering of information, available on our website:

http://www.nhoga.com/cemetery_survey_forms/cemetery_survey_deform
http://www.nhoga.com/cemetery_survey_forms/monument_survey_form.pdf

Instructions are also available:

http://www.nhoga.com/cemetery_survey_forms/monument_survey_form_instructions.pdf

Once your graveyard inventory is complete, we recommend that a copy be filed with your local library and/or historical society, and with the New Hampshire Historical Society in Concord (see Section V for their contact information).

Rubbings:

NHOGA does not recommend rubbings as a means of documenting the stones. This practice is covered under NH RSA 289:22, Stone Rubbings. Old gravestones are surprisingly fragile and any pressure on the stone can easily cause it to snap in half. Photography is a much safer option. Instructions for creating sharp photographs with clear and legible epitaphs are provided in a technical leaflet entitled "Making Photographic Records of Gravestones" by Daniel and Jesse Lie Farber. It is available through the Association for Gravestone Studies (see Section V for their contact information).

Cleaning Gravestones

Before beginning any type of cleaning or repair, it is important to know what not to do and why. Here are some of the techniques to *avoid*.

Sand blasting and high-pressure water washing. Neither of these methods should ever be used. They remove a surface layer of the stone itself, a form of mechanical erosion. Do not use *bleach*. Using bleach to clean discolored marble stones is a temptation to many people. However, it's one of the most detrimental cleaning techniques that can be used. Bleach causes invisible, irreparable damage by eating away at the surface of the stone and exposing a softer at-risk under layer. The exposure of this under layer to the elements causes the monument to decay much more rapidly than it would normally. Bleach also leaves a residue behind that no amount of rinsing can remove. Other commercial cleaners such as *Ivory soap* and *Fantastic* pose the same danger. This is because calcium ions in the stone cause the cleaning agent to become insoluble in water.

Chlorides are left behind and these cause migrating salts to form beneath the surface of the stone. As the crystals grow and exert pressure from below, this can cause the surface to slough off. *Muriatic acid, phosphoric acid, and alkaline cleaners* do more harm than good.

Cleaning headstones:

The best way to clean a grave stone is to begin with the least damaging product. Soapstone should never be cleaned with anything but water.

Start with plain water and soak the stone, and keep it wet. Gently scrub it with a soft to the touch brush, using circular motion. Patience and perseverance are the keys to this technique. Remember that whenever two objects (such as the brush and the stone) are rubbing against each other, some abrasion occurs. To minimize this, scrub as gently as possible. Scrubbing from the bottom up prevents streaks.

If water alone does not work, conservators' supply houses sell non-toxic detergents that are considered safe to use on granite, marble, limestone, sandstone and slate. Other products mentioned in brochures to remove lichen-like growth, include Photo-Flo, Triton-X 100 and Igepal, although our members have not reported using any of these products. The supply house can also provide directions for the proper use of these cleaners. Our members have used Eco friendly Simple Green Stone cleaner or equivalent.

If this does not give satisfactory results use D/2 architectural biological solution, available on Amazon or at the local NH distributor AH Harris <http://ahharris.com/stores/manchester/>.

An ideal cleaning regime would include a three-person team. The first person thoroughly wets the stone with clean water using a hose or a portable sprayer. A second person sprays the stone surface with the non-ionic or a biological cleaner, like D/2 architectural biological solution. After about a ten minute dwell time, a third person gently agitates the cleaner on the stone surface with a soft bristle brush using a circular motion, then has the stone rinsed with clean water by the first person. Repeat, as necessary.

Even when a cleaner is necessary, begin by thoroughly wetting the stone with water. Pre-wetting the stone prevents the cleaning solution from penetrating too far into the porous surface of the stone and may improve the efficiency of the cleaning agent. Gently scrub it with a soft brush. Scrubbing from the bottom up prevents streaks. Always dilute the cleaner with the recommended amount of water and rinse often with plenty of clean water. Never let any detergent dry on the surface of the stone.

A wooden stick such as an ice cream stick or tongue depressor can help clean crevices on slate or granite stones. Don't use anything other than a toothbrush on softer stones such as marble or sandstone. Never use metal implements of any kind.

Some conservators recommend not removing built up lichen, as the procedure can open the pores of the stone to a new, and worse, invasion. However, some forms of lichen are acidic in nature, not only obscuring the epitaph and icon, but eat into the surface of the stone. Lichen removal must be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Finally, never attempt to clean a stone that appears to be distressed. This is indicated by cracks, flaking, scaling, or a "sugary" (granular) surface. Tap the stone gently to make sure there are no internal hollow areas. If you have any doubt about the stone's ability to withstand the cleaning procedure, don't attempt it.

Repairing Broken Gravestones

Our members still debate over which techniques can safely be used. For instance, though we know that cement is detrimental to old stones, we don't yet know what the long-term effects of epoxy are. Most marble headstones can be put back into the slot without additional material.

Some older stones were held in place by melting sulfur and pouring sulfur into the slot.

The following describes four techniques for repairing a headstone that has been broken. The first describes the use of cement for repairing a cracked stone and resetting the base. This is no longer popular with our members. The second describes what to do if the stone has been broken into many pieces. The third describes the epoxy used by our members to repair clean breaks and the final describes what product to use if the repaired or unbroken stone needs to be reset in a slot.

Use of cement for repairs.(not recommended)

The use of cement in any type of repair, including breaks, may be detrimental to the stone. Cement was one of the most commonly used methods in the 20th century, before epoxy. Sometimes broken or fragmented stones are encased in cement. This has two unfortunate results. First, the chemicals in the cement can affect the stone. They may eat away at the stone or cause yellowing. The second is that most of the materials used to create historic gravestones are slate or marble and are much softer than cement, and are relatively brittle. As the temperature rises and falls, the slate stone expands and contracts. Because the slate is weaker than the cement, the stone cracks while the cement remains in pristine condition. Cement is no longer recommended if other techniques are available.

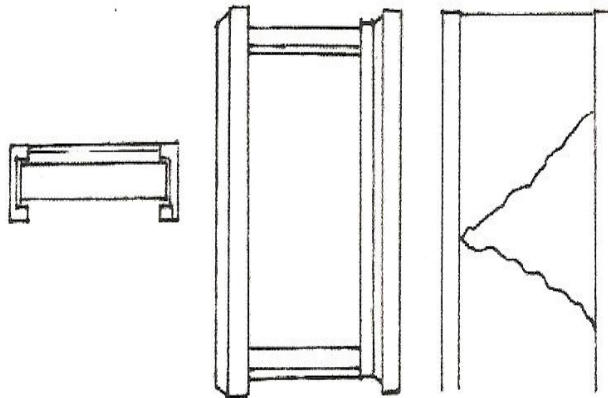


Figure 1. Repairing Broken Stones

Use of stainless steel or equivalent sleeves.

Stones which are broken in half horizontally, with the base still solid, can be repaired using high quality stainless steel sleeves that hug the vertical edges of the stone. The sleeves are held in place with small amounts of epoxy. There are some nice examples of this method in the Forest Hill Cemetery, East Derry, New Hampshire. Keep in mind that both aluminum and stainless steel expand and contract with changes in temperature. The sleeve (or brace) must be carefully fitted so that the support does not crack the stone.

Fragmented headstones.

Fragmented stones and stones that are vertically broken in more than three or four pieces need a different preservation technique. We recommend the following procedure to protect the fragments and keep them together. Begin by building an open pressure treated wooden frame, depicted in Figure 2, Stabilizing Fragmented Stones, that is five or more inches deep depending on the thickness of the headstone and large enough for the fragments to lay flat on top of pea stones. The bottom of the open frame is filled with pea stones for drainage. Place the layer of clean pea stones (or equivalent) in the bottom of the frame. Place the stone fragments on top. Use additional gravel or pebbles to hold the fragments in place. The pea stones should be slightly slanted to facilitate drainage. *Many of our members have opted to not use a frame at all.*

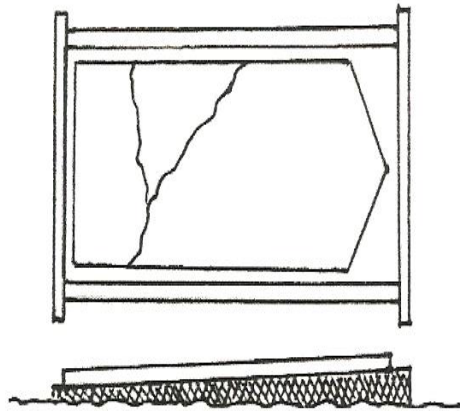


Figure 2. Stabilizing Fragmented Stones

Epoxy Repairs: NHOGA members have used the two part (Resin, Hardener) Loctite 0151 Hysol product to repair simple clean breaks. First clean both of the broken edges and apply the mixed epoxy to the top piece, carefully leaving about one half centimeter (not critical) or less clear around the edge. You should clamp the pieces, as the epoxy hardens more quickly under pressure and if any oozes, the epoxy will tend not to stick. Another popular epoxy is the BarrePak Epoxy 70 gram kit. Follow the directions as to the resin hardener mix ratio.

If the broken edges are jagged , the more skilled among our members have used a electric standard circular saw with a corundum or diamond blade to make clean cut smooth surfaces

Repairing Leaning Stones

In the case of a stone that is unbroken but leaning dangerously, we recommend the following method. Dig down into the soil until the stone has been loosened enough to gently pull it into position. This can be a sizable undertaking as the base of the stone may be nearly as large as the portion that's above ground. Hold the stone securely in place with gravel or small stones and brick fragments as shown in the diagram below. Never pack the base of the marker with cement. Temperatures fluctuate and the cement will exert pressure on the base of the stone and cause it to snap off below ground level. The gravel, pea stones , sand or equivalent will provide adequate support and good drainage. Reset the stone against the compacted soil or equivalent pea stones and fill the hole as indicated in Figure 3.

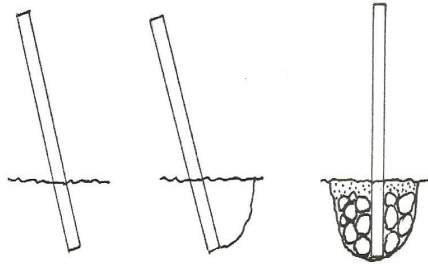


Figure 3. Repairing Leaning Stones

A similar procedure can be used for stones that have sunk and need resetting with or without a base. Dig gently to loosen earth on one side of the stone only. Prepare a base or use the original base. If you need to prepare a base see Figure 4, Raising sunken Headstones. Some stones were set in a base of concrete with a slot in order to keep them upright. Unfortunately, the cement provides a conduit allowing the stone to absorb water from the ground. Lime from the cement wicks into the stone as well. If a stone must be reset in a slot, use a non-shrink grout such as Quikrete product No. 1585-00 or equivalent, as this product will be less likely to wick moisture up the stone.

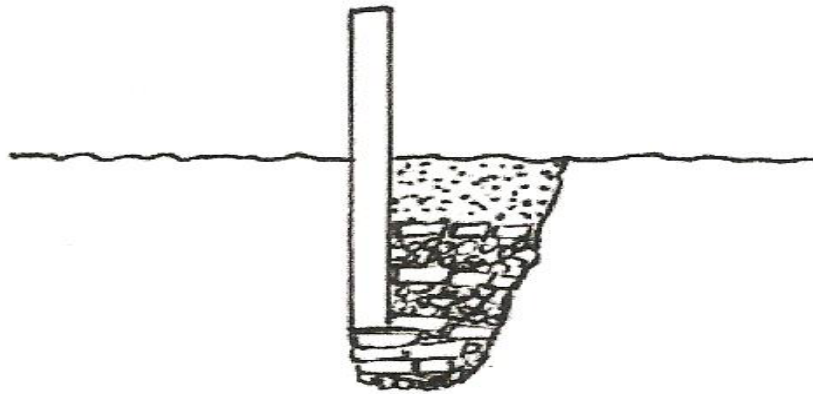


Figure 4. Raising Sunken Stones

In the case of a marble stone that has slipped out its slot, clean the slot and put it back as depicted Figure 5, Replacing Stones in Slots.

Use existing pins if possible, and mortar, not cement, only if necessary. If the base of the stone has broken off and is still in the slot, it may need to be chiseled out first.

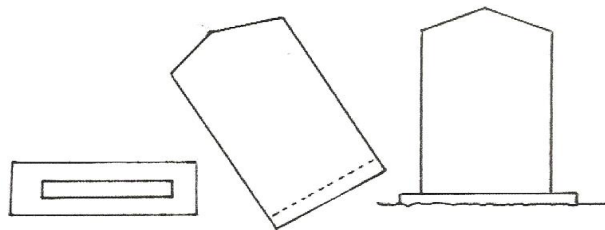


Figure 5. Replacing Stones in Slots

Controlling Plant Growth in a Graveyard

Control of plant and especially tree growth is critical to graveyard restoration. The objective is to prepare the burial ground for regular maintenance by equipment such as a small mower and trimmer. We suggest a listing of all plants found in the graveyard, both woody and herbaceous. Then, decide what you want to keep and what you want to remove. Plan carefully. It's important to study and evaluate each species. For instance, cutting down a softwood tree is an easy procedure. But cutting down a hardwood tree will lead to endless sprouting. In order to avoid this, the stump and major roots must be removed. Other challenges include sumac, lilac, sassafras and some wild roses that spread by underground stolons. Cutting these at the ground level only encourages more sprouting. Poison ivy must be removed while wearing protective clothing. It cannot be burnt as the smoke carries toxins through the air.

Trees need particular consideration. Leaving the deep shade of forest conditions will ensure minimum undergrowth, but falling limbs and trunks can shatter brittle stones and ruin fencing. Trees growing too near the gravestones will cause dislocation. Conversely, grassy burial grounds require the regular maintenance of a lawn mower and trimmer. Keep in mind that any type of power equipment is a potential danger to the stone.

Remember that a graveyard may contain old-fashioned plant materials that are worth preserving. Even wild herbaceous plants on the burial ground may be of interest. The Foss Graveyard in Rye illustrates the range of old garden plants that may be found. Pink Scotch Roses filled the entire front end. Also found were Lily of the Valley, Orange Day-lily, Double Soap-wort, Star of Bethlehem, and Turk's Cap Lily. Wild materials included tansy, Virginia Rose, and Carrion Flower. Samples of each were retained while unwanted woody plants were eliminated.

Though herbicides can be very effective in removing unwanted plant growth, it is illegal to use these chemicals unless you are either licensed to do so or own the property. Therefore, in most cases, controlling plant growth is largely a matter of cutting and digging.

Repairing Stone Walls and Other Enclosures

Simple repairs to stone walls and other historic enclosures (such as granite posts and chains) can often be done by amateurs. We encourage this maintenance, as the enclosure is often the only remaining feature of an old burial ground. In addition, New Hampshire RSAs require suitable fencing in the case of municipal cemeteries. However, since stonewall conservation sometimes requires taking the whole wall down in order to rebuild it, you may need to contract with a professional.

Gates are also an important feature of old graveyards. We recommend that the restoration of iron gates with decorative metal work be done by a professional.

Continued Maintenance

Maintenance is an important part of graveyard restoration. Brush grows back quickly, protective wooden frames rot and must be replaced, stones continue to be affected by age and the elements. Neighbors, community members or scouts performing community service projects may keep up burial grounds. Funding may be possible through grants or trust funds established by descendants. Towns may be willing to take responsibility for the graveyard's upkeep. Consultation with town officials and family members will determine which options are open to you in terms of providing routine maintenance to the burial ground.

V. Resources for Further Study

We encourage the use of these organizations, in addition to the guidelines provided by this guide.

Organizations:

The New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources

New Hampshire's state historic preservation program began in 1974 as the State Historic Preservation Office. In 1985 it became the Division of Historic Resources (DHR). The DHR believes that the historical, archaeological, architectural and cultural resources of New Hampshire are among its most important environmental assets. They promote the preservation, use, understanding and conservation of such resources for the education, inspiration, pleasure and enrichment of New Hampshire's citizens.

New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources

19 Pillsbury Street, 2nd floor

Concord, NH 03301-3570

<http://www.state.nh.us/nhdhr>

The Association for Gravestone Studies

AGS is a non-profit international organization founded in 1977 for the purpose for furthering the study, understanding and preservation of gravestones. Through its publications, workshops and conferences, AGS promotes the study of gravestones from historical and artistic perspectives, expands public awareness of the significance of historic grave markers, and encourages individuals to record and preserve gravestones. The Association's publications include Markers, an annual scholarly journal featuring articles on all aspects of gravestone research, and a quarterly newsletter.

<http://www.gravestonestudies.org/>

The American Association for State and Local History

AASLH is a non-profit educational organization dedicated to advancing knowledge, understanding and appreciation of local history in the United States and Canada. The Association supports a broad educational program and publishes a series of books on state and local history as well as a newsletter, technical leaflets, and reports designed to help members work more effectively. The American Association for State and Local History : <http://www.aaslh.org/>

Useful Books and Pamphlets:

Lynette Strangstad. "A Graveyard Preservation Primer."

http://www.gravestonestudies.org/store/books/preservation_information.htm(2014)

Published in cooperation with the Association for Gravestone Studies and the American Association for State and Local History, this book is a comprehensive guide to gravestone preservation. Her purpose in writing the book was to "tell eager would-be restorers what they must not do, what they can do, and how to do it properly." Key topics include strategic planning, working with volunteers, public awareness, documenting graveyards, cleaning and repair, working with professional conservators, ethical issues and more. Repairs to specific types of stone, such as sandstone, are also addressed. Strangstad is the owner of Stone Faces & Sacred Spaces in Mineral Point, Wisconsin. Her company offers services in stone conservation and specializes in gravestone conservation.

Tracy Walther. "Review and Evaluation of Selected Brand Name Materials for Cleaning Gravestones"

<http://www.gravestonestudies.org/faq.htm> (2014)

National Center for Preservation Technology and Training: "Best Practice Recommendations for cleaning Government Issued Headstones".

<http://ncptt.nps.gov/wp-content/uploads/Best-Practices-Final.pdf>(2014)

Photographic Records

Daniel and Jesse Lie Farber. "Making Photographic Records of Gravestones"

This technical leaflet provides useful instructions on creating sharp, legible images that highlight delicate carving and render epitaphs clear and legible. The leaflet is available through the Association for Gravestone Studies.

History and Symbolism

Allan L. Ludwig. Graven Images: New England Stone-carving and Its Symbols.

Considered a classic in its field, this book features New England stone carving and symbolism, an exploration of Puritan theology, religious history, folklore and anthropology.

Peter Benes. The Masks of Orthodoxy: Folk Gravestone Carving in Plymouth County Massachusetts, 1689-1805.

An interesting exploration of gravestone carving as folk art in 17th, 18th and 19th century Massachusetts.

Blanche Linden-Ward. Silent Cities on a Hill: Landscapes of Memory and Boston's Mount Auburn Cemetery.

A fascinating look at the Victorian garden cemeteries that became showcases of fine art and architecture in the mid 19th century. The book also explores the Victorian attitude toward death, which is often reflected in symbolic carvings on the monuments they raised to honor their dead.

Richard Meyers. Cemeteries and Grave-markers: Voices of American Culture.

A good source of information on ethnic traditions in American culture.

"Symbolism in the Carvings on Old Gravestones." A leaflet available from The Association for Gravestone Studies.

Funding

A source for applying for grants is the Foundation Grants Index, which is a comprehensive list of grants sources. This index is available at many larger libraries and online.

<http://library.dialog.com/bluesheets/html/bl0027.html>

Appendix A: Symbolism in Gravestone Art

One facet of gravestone art is the symbolism of the icons carved on the stones. Many of these provide insight into the nature of the culture in which the deceased lived. Others make a statement about the life or death of the deceased.

Some designs are easily interpreted. For instance, a winged hourglass symbolizes the swift passage of time; a tree stump or broken limb indicates that life has been cut short; and an angel trumpeting is a call to the Resurrection. Other symbols are more difficult to interpret and even experts do not always agree. Many symbols have multiple meanings. The following list describes a few of the more common symbols and their generally accepted meanings. This list refers primarily to stones carved before 1850 in the Protestant Christian tradition. Books on Victorian, fraternal and cultural symbolism are listed in Section V Resources for Further Research.

Anchor—hope is the anchor of the soul.
Angel—messenger between God and man; guide
Angel (flying)—rebirth
Angel (trumpeting)—a call to the Resurrection
Angel (weeping)—grief
Arrows or darts—mortality, the dart of death
Birds—the soul (rare)
Chains—fraternal symbol
Clock—passage of time (these are rare, but there's a fine example in Peterborough, New Hampshire)
Coffins—mortality
Column (broken)—sorrow, life cut short
Cross—salvation
Dove—Holy Ghost
Effigies—the soul
Father Time—mortality
Flame (burning)—life
Flower—the frailty of life
Flower (broken)—death
Garland—victory in death
Gourds—the coming to be and the passing away of earthy matters; the mortal body
Hand (pointing upward)—ascension to heaven; may also be a fraternal symbol
Hand (pointing downward)—calling the earth to witness; may also be a fraternal symbol
Handshake- farewell to earthly existence; may also be a fraternal symbol
Heart—the abode of the soul; love of Christ; the soul in bliss
Ivy—memory and fidelity
Lamb—Christ; the innocent.
Pomegranate—immortality
Poppy—a symbol of sleep and therefore death (Victorian)
Portals—passageways to the eternal journey
Rose—sorrow
Scallop shell—the Resurrection; a pilgrim's journey; the baptism of Christ
Scythe—time or time cut short
Skeletons—mortality
Skull (winged)—the flight of the soul from the mortal body
Skulls and crossbones—death
Star of David—a Jewish tradition

Sun (rising)—renewed life
Sun (setting)—eternal death
Sword—martyrdom; courage;
Torch (inverted)—life has been extinguished
Torch (burning)—immortality; truth; wisdom
Urn—mortality (a receptacle for the bodily remains)
Wheat—time; the divine harvest (often used to denote old age)
Willow—grief

The above list is based on local burial grounds. A more general list may be found online at:
<http://www.graveaddiction.com/symbol.html>

Appendix B: Graveyard Inventory Forms

See the NHOGA website: <http://www.nhoga.com/>

APPENDIX C

Petition

Maintenance, Repair, and Preservation of Burial Grounds: RSA289: 14a

This form may be used to petition the Selectman, Town Council, Mayor, Cemetery trustees or equivalent for permission to clean, maintain, restore and/or preserve a burial ground at the person's or organization's own expense.

Petitioned

Memo:

Selectmen, Mayor, Town Council or Cemetery Trustees of: _____

Permission is granted for the care of: Graveyard Number*: _____

Graveyard Location* *Use www.nhoga.com. _____

Authorized (Signed or Initials) _____

Petitioner:

Signed: _____

Address: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Date: _____

A record of the gravestones at this family graveyard is furnished ____ Yes ____ No (Not required)