

# A Guide to the Preservation of Burial Grounds in New Hampshire



2020 Edition

New Hampshire Old Graveyard Association

<http://www.nhoga.com>

<http://www.nhoga.org>

***A Guide to the Preservation of Burial Grounds in New Hampshire***

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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. Today we are a registered 501(c)(3), recognized by the State of NH as a Charitable Nonprofit, and have over 4300 family burial grounds 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, whereas 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 gravesite 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 2020 revision, A Guide to the Preservation of Burial Grounds in New Hampshire, contains most of the 2018 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. 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, and harsh New England weather. In addition, family members may be widely scattered, making it more difficult to secure permission or funding for maintaining a 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. The 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. And although epitaphs may be stock verses, they may also make personal statements about the men and women they memorialize.

These old graveyards also promote tourism as families often travel great distances to visit the gravesite of their ancestors. While we encourage people to explore roadside graveyards or join the many local historians who offer graveyard tours, we also 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 familiarize yourself with the State of New Hampshire Revised Statutes Annotated (RSAs) <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/NHTOC/NHTOC-XXVI.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?***

Family members that are still extant 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 may be found at your local library, the New Hampshire State Library, or online at <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/NHTOC/NHTOC-XXVI.htm>. 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 if 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. We know of no one who has ever 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 preservation.

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 Find A Grave <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. We encourage you to update any missing or inaccurate information on both our site and Find A Grave.

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, can the town vote the necessary 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, its 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 Find A Grave 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\\_form.pdf](http://www.nhoga.com/cemetery_survey_forms/cemetery_survey_form.pdf)

[http://www.nhoga.com/cemetery\\_survey\\_forms/monument\\_survey\\_form.pdf](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](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 break. 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; What to Avoid**

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, thus unable to be removed.

Also, chlorides and other salts in these cleaners are left behind creating crystals beneath the surface of the stone. As the crystals grow and exert pressure from below, this can cause the surface to slough off. Acidic cleaners like Muriatic acid and phosphoric acid, and alkaline cleaners do more harm than good.

### **Cleaning Gravestones; The Proper Way**

The best way to clean a gravestone 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 during the cleaning process. Wetting the stone prior to cleaning prevents any cleaner you may use from penetrating too deeply into the stone. Gently scrub the stone with a soft to the touch brush, using a circular motion scrub from the bottom up. If lichen or moss are present gently scrape them off with a plastic scraper. It is not necessary to remove every bit, D/2 cleaner will take care of the rest.

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.

Water alone often gives satisfactory results, if not we recommend using D/2, a non-ionic cleaner. You can find this on Amazon or at the local NH distributor like AH Harris. Other conservators' supply houses also sell non-ionic detergents that are considered safe to use on granite, marble, limestone, sandstone and slate, products such as Photo-Flo, Triton-X 100 and Igepal, although our members have not reported using any of these products.

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 scrubs the stone, from

bottom to top to reduce streaking, after which the first person rinses the stone again. If needed a third person then lightly sprays the headstone with D/2. Let this sit for 5-10 minutes then scrub the stone again. The first person again rinses the stone and finally, the third person mists the stone with D/2. D/2 works slowly, come back in a few months and you'll see a cleaner 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, which would indicate a weak stone. If you have any doubt about the stone's ability to withstand the cleaning procedure, just lightly spray it lightly with D/2 and leave it.

### **Repairing Broken Gravestones**

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century cement was one of the most commonly used materials to repair broken gravestones, as witnessed today by the many examples found in old graveyards. In some cases, broken and fragmented stones can be found completely encased in cement.

The use of cement has two unfortunate results. First, the chemicals in cement can negatively affect the stone, eating away at the stone or causing yellowing. The second is that many of the materials used to create historic gravestones were slate and marble, which are much softer than cement and are relatively brittle. The thermal expansion rate of these materials is quite different, and because slate and marble are weaker than cement, the stone cracks while the cement remains in pristine condition, so today the use of cement is strongly discouraged.

Our members still debate over which techniques can safely be used, but currently most preservationists are using epoxy to repair gravestones, though sparingly, if not used correctly it can block the migration of water through a stone.

Gravestones break in many ways, and though the basics of repairing them is the same, assembling all the pieces, dry fitting before assembly, bonding with epoxy, bracing and clamping, the details vary with each gravestone, and are beyond the scope of this Guide to try to explain. For a detailed explanation we refer you to **Section V: Further Research**, *Cemetery Conservators for United Standards*. This site has valuable and detailed information on all aspects of graveyard preservation. This Guide we will cover only the basic techniques of gravestone repair.

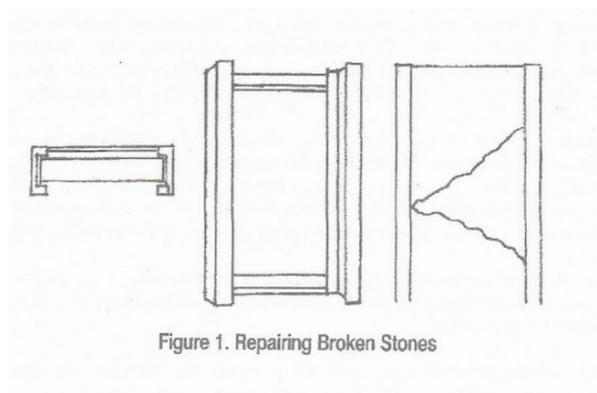


Figure 1. Repairing Broken Stones

### Use of Stainless-Steel Sleeves.

Stones which are broken in a somewhat horizontal direction, but not fragmented, and have a base still solid, can be repaired using high quality stainless-steel sleeves that hug the vertical edges of the stone, as shown above. The sleeves are connected by a bar at the top and bottom. 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 that are broken in many pieces may 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 below, that is five or more inches deep depending on the thickness of the headstone and a little larger than the headstone. Put down a sloped layer of  $\frac{3}{8}$ "-  $\frac{3}{4}$ " stone as show in the diagram and pack this down. Place the stone fragments on top of this layer then fill around the perimeter of the headstone to a level even with the headstone surface. This should provide for adequate drainage around and under the headstone. Some of our members have used concrete blocks in place of the wood and some have used no frame at all.

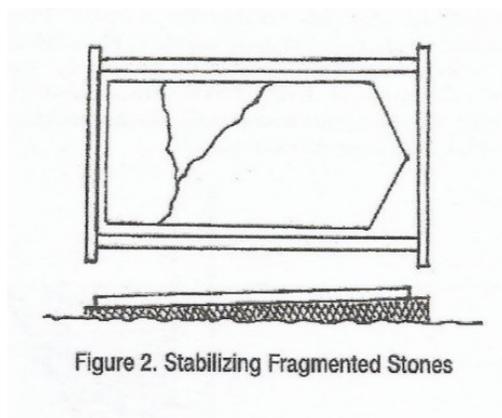


Figure 2. Stabilizing Fragmented Stones

## Epoxy Repairs

Epoxy has become the favored product for repairing broken gravestones. Refer to **Section V: Resources for Further Research; Cemetery Conservators for United Standards (CCUS)** for recommended epoxies. Regardless of the epoxy used the repair process is basically the same. For a simple clean break with two pieces, use a bristle brush to thoroughly clean the broken edges of both stones, test for fit, spot the epoxy along the middle of the broken edge of one piece or lay a thin layer along the middle of the entire break, leaving about ¼” (not critical) or less clear along the edge so that later a mortar, tinted to match the stone, can be used as an infill. Be careful not to use too much epoxy, you don’t want it oozing out the side. If the stone is being repaired in the vertical position the weight of the top piece is usually sufficient for a strong bond, otherwise lay the stone on a horizontal surface and clamp the pieces together. In either case it is best to use angle iron along the edges to keep the pieces lined up. Always read the safety precautions when using epoxy. For more complicated breaks refer to CCUS.

## Resetting Leaning or Fallen Stones

In the case of a stone that is unbroken but leaning dangerously, provide support for the stone while removing soil from the side opposite the leaning direction, as shown in Figure 3 below. When the stone has been loosened enough, gently move it to a vertical position. Hold the stone securely in place while packing 3/8”- 3/4” stone around the base of headstone, this will provide adequate support and good drainage. Fill the rest of the hole with the turf that was removed and pack it snugly against the stone. This process is essentially the same for resetting fallen, unbroken stones, and the bottom section of a broken stone.

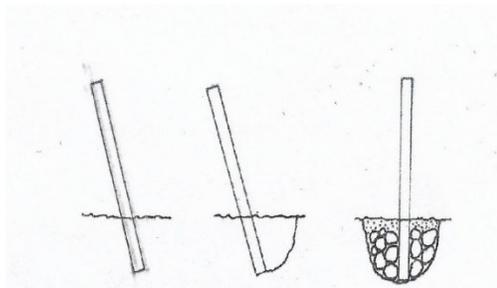


Figure 3. Repairing Leaning Stones

## Raising Sunken Stones

A similar procedure can be used for a sunken stone, see **Figure 4, Raising Sunken Headstones** (next page), as was used for resetting leaning stones. While supporting the stone remove the earth from one side of the stone only. Raise and hold the stone at a height such that any inscriptions will be above ground. If you don’t have the equipment to hold it in place, remove the stone and set it aside. Create a new solid surface for the headstone to sit on. Flat stones would be best but packed 3/8”-3/4” stone would also work. After setting the headstone in place fill the hole with more stone and pack it down, then add the topsoil. If the stone has a base it would of course need to be removed as well, other than that the process is the same.

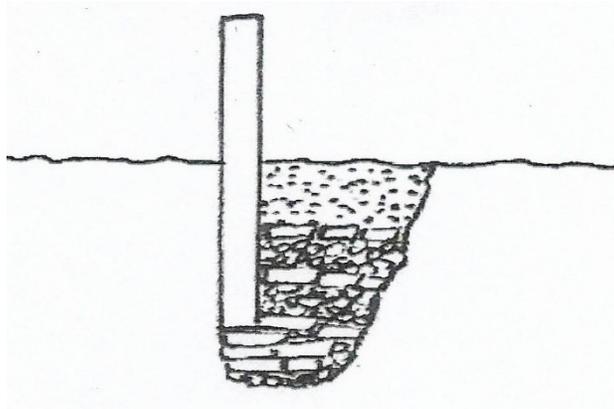


Figure 4. Raising Sunken Stones

### Replacing Stones in Slots

In the case of a headstone that has slipped out of its slotted base, clean out the slot and place the stone back into the slot as depicted in **Figure 5: Replacing Stones in Slots**. Most headstones that were in a slotted base can be put back into the slot without additional material, use existing pins if possible or use mortar to secure the stone in the slot if it is wobbly. Some older stones were held in place by melting sulfur and pouring the sulfur into the slot, or with lead wedges, these would need to be removed. If the base of the stone has broken off and is still in the slot, you need to decide if top of the stone can be bonded to that piece. If not, it will need to be chiseled out and the bottom of the stone will need to be squared off and set in the slot. All this needs to be determined on a case by case basis.

Some stones were set in a base of concrete with a slot 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 in a concrete 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.

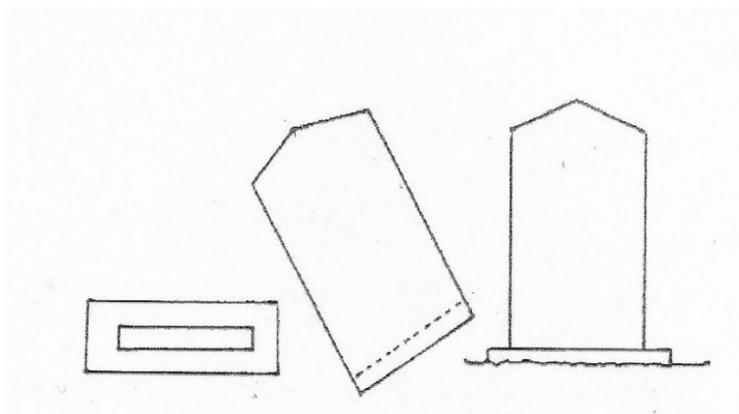


Figure 5. Replacing Stones in Slots

## **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 affective 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 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 Research**

### **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/>

### ***Cemetery Conservators for United Standards (CCUS).***

A great source for information on all aspects of graveyard preservation. Found online at <https://cemeteryconservatorsunitedstandards.org/>

### **Useful Books and Pamphlets:**

Lynette Strangstad. "A Graveyard Preservation Primer."

[http://www.gravestonestudies.org/store/books/preservation\\_information.htm\(2014\)](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](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\(2014\)](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.

"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/b10027.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**, above.

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)