"Show me your cemeteries and I will tell you what kind of people you have."

Benjamin Franklin

DO NOT apply herbicides, like Roundup, to vegetation in a cemetery.

DO NOT use a weed wacker that can score permanent scratches into the surface of a stone. If you intend to use a weed wacker, install a cord that is no wider than .065 inches.

Try NOT to mow around (or over!) grave markers. Much damage can be done with a mower blade.

How to record or document a cemetery?

Recording a cemetery may be the single most valuable act of preservation. As open and undeveloped land is increasingly used for other purposes, it becomes more and more important to record exact cemetery locations and their boundaries. To date, over 200 family, church, and community cemeteries have been recorded in Fauquier County; but there are still many others that have yet to be officially identified. Fauquier County cemetery survey forms are available online at *www.fauquiercounty.gov/government/departments/gis.*

How to develop land with a recorded cemetery?

Land with a recorded cemetery can still be developed if it complies with other Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance regulations. Generally, a cemetery can be incorporated into a new development. Virginia state cemetery laws prohibit the destruction of cemeteries, so plan your development to avoid the cemetery.

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Maintaining Cemeteries

FAUQUIER COUNTY

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Cemeteries are some of our most significant and complex cultural resources. They are not only important places of remembrance, but also outdoor museums. Unlike traditional museums, these sites present a collection of unique artifacts that have remained in their original context—some more than 200 years in Fauquier County. Because they are exposed to the elements, cemeteries are subject to long-term deterioration from natural forces, such as weathering and uncontrolled vegetation. Pollution and neglect accelerates the deterioration process, and misuse and vandalism continue to hinder preservation efforts.

How to begin?

Because cemeteries are both archaeological sites and cultural landscapes, caring for them can be complex. Most grave markers are made of stone or concrete, and while these materials appear to be durable, they can actually be quite fragile. Whether simply attempting to read an inscription, documenting the location of a cemetery, or planning to repair or clean a stone marker, do careful research in advance to make sure no harm is done.

How to clear an overgrown cemetery?

If starting to work with a neglected or overgrown cemetery, first assess the area before removing vegetation. Graves were marked in many different ways (i.e., with field stones, cedar trees, wooden markers that are no longer extant, etc.). Disturbing the landscape without assessment could eliminate evidence of burial sites. Leave mounds of rocks, field stones, gravestone fragments and temporary funeral markers where they are, and refrain from trimming trees or removing any historic plants, like yucca or bulb plants that were commonly planted at cemeteries. Use hand clippers—not chainsaws.

How to clean grave markers?

Before cleaning grave markers, consider, "does this truly need cleaning?" Often patina of age is mistaken for dirt. Consequently, once cleaning begins, it may need to continue; and every cleaning, no matter how gentle, has the potential to cause damage.

Sometimes, cleaning is necessary due to extensive biological growth. Biologicals, such as algae, lichen, or fungi, can be hazardous because they trap moisture on and under the surface. After inserting "roots" into the pores of the stone, the growth swells and shrinks in response to the moisture, which leads to cracking and spalling. Biologicals also secrete acids that can dissolve limestone, marble, sandstone, concrete, and mortar over time.

How to read a deteriorated inscription?

DO NOT make rubbings of grave markers. As harmless as this may seem, it actually adds to the deterioration process. DO NOT use dirt, flour, talcum/baby power, or shaving cream to help read inscriptions. These substances, especially shaving cream, accelerate biological growth. As an alternative, reflect light on the stone. Hand mirrors, portable photography reflectors and flashlights can be used effectively.

GRAVE MARKER CLEANING DOS AND DON'TS

DO—Liberally wet a grave marker with potable water before any application of cleanser, and thoroughly rinse after cleaning. Stone is a very porous material, so cleaning requires a LOT of water.

DO—Use a gentle, non-ionic cleaner with a neutral pH of 7 or one close to the pH of the stone. Understand the properties of the stone or concrete BEFORE any cleaning substance is applied.

DO—On smooth stable surfaces, gently brush biological growth with a tool that is softer than the stone, like a popsicle stick or bamboo skewer.

DO—Biocides, like the product D2, are available for use on stones that have significant biological growth. With biocides, always follow the manufacturer's directions.

DO—Use very soft bristle brushes, like vegetable brushes. Tooth brushes are commonly used for small crevices. Gently clean from the bottom of a marker to the top in small, circular motions to minimize streaking.

Try NOT to choose brushes with metal components to reduce the chance of scratching the stone.

DO NOT use bleach. Bleach contains salts that are soaked into the stone or concrete and cause many problems over time.

DO NOT power wash.

DO NOT sand blast.

DO NOT use acid based cleaners. Acid dissolves limestone and marble, leaving a glossy or crystallized surface. This damage cannot be undone.