

NEVER USE BLEACH OR ANY CHEMICAL CLEANER.

NEVER USE A SEALANT.

NEVER USE A POWER OR PRESSURE WASHER.

NEVER USE ANYTHING MADE OF METAL ON THE STONE, e.g., scrapers or brushes.

NEVER CLEAN A WHITE BRONZE OR ZINC MARKER following the instructions in this brochure. Specialized handling of these monuments is required.

Record your hours on the Service to America Tally

COVER PHOTO: JUDITH FROST GILLIS
DEAN HILL CEMETERY, ORLAND, MAINE

2022

Tools of The Trade

- ◇ soft cloths or natural sponges
- ◇ natural or soft-bristled brushes
- ◇ a soft-bristle toothbrush
- ◇ soft wooden craft sticks
- ◇ rubber gloves
- ◇ hat, sunscreen, bug spray
- ◇ safety glasses
- ◇ kneeling pads
- ◇ grass clippers
- ◇ handheld spray bottles, backpack sprayers
- ◇ buckets for water
- ◇ trash bags for grass clippings, debris
- ◇ water – multiple large containers if the cemetery does not have a water source



Guidelines to Properly Clean a Gravestone



Historic Preservation Committee

Before You Begin

If you are not a relative of the person interred, you must have permission from the lot owner or next of kin.

Check your state statutes, as well as with local officials, the cemetery Sexton, the Cemetery Association, or descendants to see whether permission is required before you begin cleaning. Place a public notice in your local paper. Contact the police to alert them that you will be working in the graveyard and have obtained the required permission.

Record of the stone. Date of your visit. (Stones should not be cleaned more than once a year.) Take before and after (if stone is cleaned) photos. Measure the entire stone including the base, determine what type of material was used (slate, marble, granite, soapstone, metal) and the shape (tablet, obelisk, tiered, flat), inscription, markings/symbols. Share copies of your records with the governing body of the cemetery.

Evaluate condition of the headstone. Is the stone leaning at an angle, loose or off its base, already cracked or broken, showing signs of flaking or having been repaired? Do not clean until the stone has been stabilized.

Determine whether the stone really needs to be cleaned. If the inscription is clearly readable, then it probably should not be cleaned. **Remember**, every time a stone is brushed or rubbed, deterioration to the surface is likely to occur.

Be mindful of outdoor temperatures — summer daytime heat, spring & fall over night freezing.

Water temperatures. If water from a hose is colder than air temperature, it can damage and even crack the older stones.

Watch "Historic Preservation—With Respect: Preserving Historic Cemeteries." This 20 minute video housed in the DAR Webinar Library is also a perfect chapter program.

CLEANING THE STONE

- ◇ **DO NO HARM** - the first step in cleaning a gravestone.
- ◇ Clear away any plants or vegetation covering and/or touching the stone, including its base.
- ◇ Remove loose, dry material first with a soft cloth, then a soft-bristled brush. Rinse with clean water.
- ◇ Use **WATER ONLY** to clean stones.
- ◇ Wet the entire stone with water and keep it wet during the entire process.
- ◇ Clean the sides and back of the stone first, saving the front for last.
- ◇ Wash each face of the stone from the **BOTTOM UP** to avoid streaking.
- ◇ Use small circular motions as you work. Do not scrub hard.
- ◇ Change the water often. Using dirty water can cause scratching of the stone.
- ◇ Clean out carved and other recessed areas of the stone with a soft toothbrush or soft wooden craft sticks, if necessary.
- ◇ If permitted by the cemetery, use of a cleaning agent such as D/2, a non-ionic cleaner, is highly recommended.
- ◇ Finish the cleaning process by rinsing the entire stone with a **GENEROUS** quantity of clean water. A pump sprayer is ideal.
- ◇ Take your "after" photo. Add it to the Memorial on Find a Grave.