

## Successful Cemetery Research

1. **Before You Leave Home** – A successful research trip always begins at home. You will be much happier with the results of your research if you complete as much preliminary work as possible before you leave the house.
  - a. Determine your primary and secondary goals.
    - For what information are you searching?
    - Have you checked to see if cemetery information has already been extracted?
    - Make a checklist of things to do.
  - b. Determine the type of cemetery; national, city, county, church, family, private.
  - c. If not in the United States, make sure you check on the customs of the country. Remember you are a visitor!
  - d. Obtain a physical location of the cemetery (Address, GPS, directions, etc.)
    - Mapping/Address Software, i.e. Street Atlas USA
    - Cyndi's List <http://www.cyndislist.com/cemetery.htm>
    - Google Maps <http://maps.google.com/>
    - Map Quest <http://www.mapquest.com/>
    - Terra Server USA <http://www.terra-server.com/>
    - USGS Board on Geographic Names <http://geonames.usgs.gov/index.html>
    - Windows Live Local <http://local.live.com/>
    - If all else fails try local churches, funeral homes, historical and genealogical societies, monument carvers, veterans or fraternal organizations, or florists.
  - e. Is there an active Administrator or Sexton?
    - AnyWho: Internet Directory Service <http://www.anywho.com/>
    - Yahoo Yellow Pages <http://yp.yahoo.com/>
    - AT&T Yellow Pages <http://www.yellowpages.com/>
  - f. What are the days and hours of operation for the cemetery and office? Are there any special rules? If possible contact the Sexton or Administrator and inquire about availability of records, maps, and fees.
  - g. Research the cemetery's history of natural disasters, closures, relocations, etc.



## 2. Cemetery Research Kit Checklist

The following are suggested items to take with you on your trip to the cemetery. Not all items will be necessary on each trip; and on some trips, additional tools may be necessary. Much will depend on the upkeep and condition of the cemetery and grave site.

- Area Maps
- Cell phone
- Research notebook, research notes and goals from above; Cemetery Survey Forms with clipboard, pens and pencils
- Camera, film or digital (preferred) with plenty of extra film and batteries
- A light-weight tripod or a mini-tripod will hold camera steady in low-light conditions.
- A small digital or tape recorder can be handy for recording notes. Don't forget extra batteries and tapes.
- Global Positioning System (GPS) and/or compass
- Reflector or convex mirror for reflecting light on markers
- Surveyor's wheel or Measuring tape
- Grass clippers or large pair of scissors for removing grass from around markers
- Soft brush or cloth for removing dust and loose material from markers
- Small spray bottle of water
- A small piece of Styrofoam can be useful for removing lichen.
- 18-inch, thin metal probe to locate markers for sunken stones or severely overgrown conditions
- Camp stool or light-weight, folding chair for when you get tired
- Personal first aid kit
- Hat to protect your head and neck from sunburn
- Rain gear: a compact umbrella is better than a raincoat since it can also protect the camera
- Sunscreen and insect repellent
- Plenty of drinking water or other liquids to stay hydrated
- If you are going to be there awhile, consider taking snacks or pack a lunch.



## Guide to Safe Cemetery Research

1. **Never conduct research in a cemetery by yourself; always use the buddy system!** While cemeteries are not inherently dangerous, potential for injury is high. Some rural cemeteries are quite remote with few visitors and injuries have been reported from falling monuments and unstable grounds. If you must go alone, be sure to tell a friend or family member where you are going and when you should return.
2. **Known where you're going!** Some urban cemeteries are located in areas that attract undesirable characters and you should look for signs of vandalism, empty bottles, cans, or discarded syringes. Weigh any risks and remember your personal safety comes first.
3. **Wear protective clothing!**
  - a. Long trousers and a long-sleeve shirt may be somewhat uncomfortable during the summer, but will help protect you from sunburn, underbrush, insects and other bites.
  - b. A hat will help protect your head and neck from sunburn.
  - c. Footwear should cover the entire foot (no sandals) and have treaded soles to reduce slipping.
  - d. Buckskin gloves are thin and pliable enough for working, but provide protection from scrapes, cuts and bites.
4. **Always check in at the office upon arrival!** Ask about indexes to burials, cemetery and plot maps, records, and directions to the grave site and the nearest restrooms. If you've done your homework, you should already know most of this.
5. **Remember where you are!** Act and behave accordingly. Remember to treat all markers, graves and other visitors with dignity and respect. Leave no trace! Pack out whatever you bring in with you.
6. **Never attempt any excavation,** relocation or repair of graves or markers without written permission of cemetery authorities. Remember in many States, graves and markers are considered historical property and regardless of your good intentions, you could be in serious violation of the law.
7. **Don't get careless!** Never sit upon, stand on, or lean against any marker or monument.
8. **Be aware of your surroundings at all times!** Even a small headstone's collapse can cause severe injury.
9. **Stay on roads and paths where possible!** Watch for tripping hazards and beware of slippery surfaces, particularly in wet or icy weather. When walking among the graves, beware of sunken areas and broken or sunken markers that may create a tripping hazard.
10. **Watch out for and avoid:**
  - a. Poisonous plants, thorns, nettles, etc.;
  - b. Stinging insects (mosquitoes, ants, bees, wasps, and hornets, among others);
  - c. Snakes and other reptiles;
  - d. Other animals.
11. **Never use anything but water on a marker** and never use water during winter. Chalk, flour, shaving cream, household cleaners, or other chemicals can cause permanent damage to the marker.
12. **Research Procedures**
  - a. If you photograph the cemetery entrance, it helps keep your photographs organized. Keep a record of each photograph in your research notebook.
  - b. Complete a Cemetery Marker Survey Sheet for each individual.
    - Identify markers and graves
    - Measure the plot and individual markers
    - Describe the plot and markers
    - Transcribe inscriptions
    - Draw and/or photograph the plot and markers
  - c. **Cemetery Photography**
    - Photograph the entire plot showing layout of markers.
    - Photograph the whole marker so that all carvings and inscriptions are shown.
    - Get a close-up photograph of the inscription so it can be clearly read.
    - Get a close-up photograph of any symbols or lettering.
      - Hint: Photographing grave markers depends a great deal on the condition of the marker and the depth of the engraving. In good condition, markers tend to photograph best on an overcast day, or when light strikes the surface at about a 30° angle. On bright days, you may need to shade the marker to obtain best the results.
      - Hint: You can sometimes improve lighting conditions by use of a reflector, a mirror, or you might try using forced flash mode (fill flash).
      - Hint: Filters can help in different lighting conditions (try red, blue, and polarizing filters).
      - Spraying the marker with water will sometimes make it easier to read.

## Tombstone Symbols

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<b>Anchor/Ships</b>	Hope; a Mariner
<b>Angels</b>	Spirituality; guards of the tomb
<b>Angels, flying</b>	Rebirth; resurrection
<b>Angels, trumpeting</b>	Heralds of the final coming; rebirth; the resurrection
<b>Arches</b>	Victory even in Death
<b>Arrow(s)</b>	Mortality
<b>Axe, knife steel and cleaver</b>	Butcher (occupation)
<b>Bible</b>	Sign of Christian faith
<b>Bible, open</b>	Minister/preacher
<b>Bird(s)</b>	Eternal Life
<b>Bird(s), flying</b>	Resurrection, flight of the soul
<b>Book, open</b>	Teacher
<b>Books, two</b>	LDS grave: indicates the <i>Bible</i> and the <i>Book of Mormon</i>
<b>Books, three</b>	LDS grave: The Scripture of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints - the <i>Bible</i> , <i>Book of Mormon</i> , and <i>Doctrine &amp; Covenants</i>
<b>Bouquets</b>	Condolences, grief, sorrow
<b>Bowl and razor</b>	Tools of a Barber
<b>Bugles</b>	Military Service or Resurrection
<b>Butterfly</b>	Died young
<b>Candle(s)</b>	Light of the spirit
<b>Candle, snuffed</b>	Time, Mortality
<b>Chains, broken</b>	The spirit released from its earthly body
<b>Chalice</b>	Christian Sacrament
<b>Cherub</b>	Angelic; innocent; child
<b>Coffin</b>	Mortality
<b>Column, broken</b>	Loss of the Head of the family
<b>Column(s)</b>	Heavenly entrance
<b>Corn</b>	Ripe old age
<b>Corn, stalk of</b>	Farmer; gardener
<b>Crescent</b>	Muslim faith
<b>Cross (any one of different designs)</b>	Emblem of Christian faith. Each type can have a different meaning.
<b>Crown</b>	Life after death; Blacksmith
<b>Dart, figure with</b>	Mortality or man
<b>Dog</b>	A good person; worthy of love
<b>Door(s)</b>	Heavenly entrance
<b>Dove</b>	Innocence, Purity, Gentle, Affection
<b>Fruit</b>	Eternal plenty; fruit of life
<b>Garlands</b>	Victory in death; saintliness and glory
<b>Grim Reaper</b>	Death personified
<b>Hammer and anvil</b>	Blacksmith
<b>Hand, chopping</b>	Sudden death
<b>Hand, pointing up</b>	Pointing the way to Heaven
<b>Hands, blessing</b>	Blessing of those left behind
<b>Hands, clasped</b>	Bond of marriage; farewell
<b>Hands, Praying</b>	Prayer for eternal life
<b>Harp</b>	Praise the Almighty
<b>Heart</b>	Love for the departed
<b>Hearts</b>	Soul at rest or in blissfulness
<b>Hearts, joined</b>	Marriage
<b>Hoe, rake</b>	Farmer; gardener
<b>Horns</b>	The resurrection
<b>Hourglass</b>	Swift passing of time; time run out
<b>Hourglass w/wings</b>	Time flies, short lived
<b>Ivy</b>	Friendship; immortality
<b>Lamb</b>	Innocence; child
<b>Lamp, shining</b>	Immortality of the spirit; resurrection

<b>Laurel</b>	Military heroism; great accomplishments
<b>Lily</b>	Innocence; purity; virginal
<b>Lion</b>	Courage; eternal watch over the tomb
<b>Loom, Shuttle, and Stretchers</b>	Weaver
<b>Menorah</b>	Emblem of Jewish faith
<b>Morning glory</b>	Beginning of life
<b>Oak leaves</b>	Maturity; old age; authority figure; military officer
<b>Oak Leaves and acorns</b>	See Oak Leaves
<b>Palm fronds</b>	Rejoicing; Victory over death
<b>Pall, Picks, and Shovels</b>	Mortality
<b>Poppy</b>	Sleep eternal
<b>Rake and spade</b>	Farmer; gardener
<b>Rings, broken</b>	Family circle broken
<b>Rod or staff</b>	Comfort for the bereaved (23 Psalm)
<b>Rooster</b>	A new dawn; awakening; resurrection
<b>Rose bud</b>	Love; renewal of life
<b>Rose, full bloom</b>	Died in prime of life
<b>Roses</b>	Shortness of life
<b>Rosemary</b>	Remembrance
<b>Scroll</b>	The Scroll of Life
<b>Set of Scales with a sign</b>	Merchant
<b>Sextant and Crossed Staff</b>	Mariner (of rank)
<b>Skull</b>	Deaths Head
<b>Skull and Crossed Bones</b>	Deaths Head (1600-1700)
<b>Spade</b>	Death
<b>Spade and rake</b>	Farmer; gardener
<b>Spade and shovel crossed</b>	Death
<b>Star, shining</b>	Spirit lives on even through the darkness of death
<b>Star of David</b>	Emblem of Judaism
<b>Stars &amp; stripes shield on or surrounding eagle</b>	Liberty; eternal vigilance; frequent appearance w/military
<b>Sun</b>	A renewed life; life everlasting
<b>Swords, crossed</b>	High ranking military officer
<b>Scythe</b>	Tool of the Grim Reaper to harvest the souls
<b>Thistles</b>	Remembrance; possibly of Scottish descent
<b>Tombs</b>	Mortality
<b>Torch, inverted</b>	Life extinguished
<b>Torch with flame</b>	Immortality of the spirit; resurrection
<b>Tree</b>	Long life
<b>Tree, sprouting</b>	Life everlasting; resurgence of life
<b>Tree Stump</b>	Loss of Head of the family; stone shaped like tree stumps usually signify a member of the Woodmen of the World
<b>Tree, Weeping Willow</b>	Sorrow
<b>Trumpeters</b>	Heralds of the final coming
<b>Urn</b>	Immortality.
<b>Urn with flame</b>	Undying friendship; eternal remembrance
<b>Urn with wreath or draped</b>	Mourning
<b>Wedge and Level</b>	Mason (occupation)
<b>Weeping Willow</b>	Sorrow
<b>Wheat sheaf or strands</b>	Ripe for harvest; the divine harvest; time
<b>Winged Effigies</b>	Soul's flight
<b>Wreath</b>	Saintliness and glory; Victory in death

## Tombstone Abbreviations

<b>AAONMS</b>	Ancient Arabic Order of Nobles of the Mystic Shrine (Shriners)
<b>AE Latin</b>	<i>Aetatis</i> ; Years of life
<b>AASR</b>	Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite (Masonic)
<b>ABA</b>	American Benefit Association
<b>AF&amp;AM</b>	Ancient Free and Accepted Masons
<b>AMORC</b>	Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis (Rosicrucians)
<b>AOF</b>	Ancient Order of Foresters
<b>AOH</b>	Ancient Order of Hibernians
<b>AOKMC</b>	Ancient Order of Knights of the Mystic Chain
<b>AOUW</b>	Ancient Order of United Workmen
<b>BPOE</b>	Benevolent Protective Order of Elks
<b>CBKA</b>	Commandery of Benevolent Knights Association
<b>CSA</b>	Confederate States of America
<b>DAR</b>	Daughters of the American Revolution
<b>DAV</b>	Disabled American Veterans
<b>D.S.P. Latin</b>	<i>decessit sine prole</i> ; Died without issue
<b>D.S.P.L. Latin</b>	<i>decessit sine prole legitima</i> ; Died without legitimate issue
<b>D.S.P.M.S. Latin</b>	<i>decessit sine prole mascula supersita</i> ; Died without surviving male issue
<b>D.S.P.S. Latin</b>	<i>decessit sine prole supersita</i> ; Died without surviving issue
<b>D. Unm.</b>	Died unmarried
<b>D.V.M. Latin</b>	<i>decessit vita matris</i> ; died in the lifetime of his mother
<b>D.V.P. Latin</b>	<i>decessit vita patris</i> ; died in the lifetime of his father
<b>D.Y.</b>	Died young
<b>EBA</b>	Emerald Beneficial Association
<b>FOE</b>	Fraternal Order of Eagles
<b>FOF</b>	Fraternal Order of Firefighters
<b>FOP</b>	Fraternal Order of Police
<b>GAR</b>	Grand Army of the Republic
<b>H.S. Latin</b>	Here is buried
<b>I.H.S. Greek</b>	Christ
<b>IHSV</b>	Red Cross of Constantine (Masonic)
<b>IOI</b>	Independent Order of Immaculates
<b>IOJD</b>	Independent Order of Job's Daughters
<b>IOKP</b>	Independent Order of the Knights of Pythias
<b>IOF</b> <b>IOOF</b>	Independent Order of Odd Fellows
<b>IORM</b>	Improved Order of Redmen (Sons of Liberty)
<b>IORG</b>	International Order of Rainbow Girls (Masonic)
<b>ISDA</b>	Italian Sons and Daughters of America
<b>ISH</b>	Independent Sons of Honor
<b>IUOM</b>	Independent United Order of Mechanics
<b>IWW</b>	Industrial Workers of the World
<b>JAOUW</b>	Junior Order, Ancient Order of United Workmen
<b>KC</b> <b>KOC</b> <b>K of C</b>	Knights of Columbus
<b>KFM</b> <b>K of FM</b>	Knights of Father Mathew
<b>KGE</b>	Knights of the Golden Eagle
<b>KHC</b>	Knights of the Holy Cross
<b>KOH</b>	Knights of Honor

<b>K of L</b>	Knights of Loyola
<b>KM</b>	Knights of Malta (Masonic)
<b>KMC</b>	Knights of the Mystic Chain
<b>KOTM</b>	Knights of the Maccabees
<b>KPC</b> <b>K of PC</b>	Knights of Peter Claver
<b>KP</b> <b>KOP</b> <b>K of P</b>	Knights of Pythias
<b>KSC</b>	Knights of St. Columbkille
<b>KG</b> <b>KSTG</b>	Knights of St. George
<b>KSTI</b>	Knights of St. Ignatius
<b>K of SJ</b>	Knights of St. John
<b>KSTJ</b>	Knights of St. Joseph
<b>KSL</b>	Knights of St. Lawrence
<b>KSTM</b>	Knights of St. Martin
<b>K of STP</b>	Knights of St. Patrick
<b>KSTP</b>	Knights of St. Paul; Knights of St. Peter
<b>KSTT</b>	Knights of St. Thomas
<b>K of STW</b>	Knights of St. Wenceslas
<b>KT</b> <b>K of T</b>	Knights of Tabor
<b>KSF</b>	Knights of Sherwood Forest
<b>KT</b>	Knights Templar (Masonic)
<b>LDG</b>	Independent Order of Foresters
<b>LGAR</b>	Ladies of the Grand Army of the Republic
<b>LOOM</b>	Loyal Order of the Moose
<b>MCL</b>	Marine Corps League
<b>MOPH</b>	Military Order of the Purple Heart
<b>MOOSE</b>	Loyal Order of the Moose
<b>MRA</b>	Royal Arcanum
<b>MWA</b>	Modern Woodmen of America
<b>NCOA</b>	Non-Commissioned Officers Association
<b>NL</b>	Navy League
<b>NSDAR</b>	National Society Daughters of American Revolution
<b>OES</b>	Order of the Eastern Star
<b>OSC</b>	Order of Scottish Clans (St. Andrew's Societies)
<b>O.S.P. Latin</b>	<i>Obit Sine Prole</i> ; Died without children
<b>PM</b>	Patriarchs Militant (IOOF)
<b>RA</b>	Royal Arcanum; Royal Academy
<b>RK</b>	Roman Knights
<b>RSTV</b>	Rite of St. Vita
<b>RAM</b>	Royal Arch Masons
<b>SAR</b>	Sons of the American Revolution; Sisters of the American Revolution
<b>SOT</b>	Sons of Temperance
<b>SR</b>	Scottish Rite (Masonic Order)
<b>SUVCW</b>	Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War
<b>SV</b>	Son of Veterans (USA)
<b>TH</b> <b>T of H</b>	Temple of Honor (IOOF)
<b>UCV</b>	United Confederate Veterans
<b>UDC</b>	United Daughters of the Confederacy
<b>UR</b>	Uniform Ranks (Knights of Pythias)
<b>VFW</b>	Veterans of Foreign Wars
<b>WOW</b>	Woodmen of the World

## Cemetery Research for the Genealogist and Historian Selected Bibliography and Resources

I list here only the writings that have been of use in the making of this education presentation. It is by no means a complete record of all the works and sources I have consulted. It indicates the range and substance of reading upon which my ideas were formed, and I intend it to serve as a convenience for those that wish to pursue this study further.

American World War II Orphans Network. "Grave Visit Checklist." Online  
<<http://www.awon.org/check2.html>>.

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Wold, Andy E. "How to Photograph a Headstone Survey" Utah GenWeb, Salt Lake County. Online  
<[http://www.rootsweb.com/~utsaltla/Tips/\\_tip\\_HeadstoneSurvey.html](http://www.rootsweb.com/~utsaltla/Tips/_tip_HeadstoneSurvey.html)>. Salt Lake City

Differences between the various types of crosses are explained at:  
<http://www.walsirat.com/symbols/cross.html>, a part of The City of the Silent.

I wish to especially thank the following for permission to use many of their photographs, demonstrating the different types and styles of markers, materials and styles of decoration and symbols:

Schlitzberger & Daughters Monument Company  
6859 Lawndale St  
Houston, Texas  
<http://www.schlitzbergers.com/>  
Ph 713-926-1785

Forest Lawn Heritage Foundation  
Forest Lawn Cemetery  
Buffalo, New York