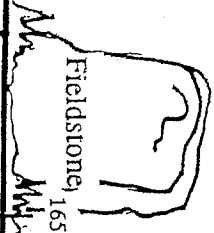
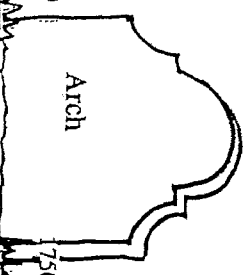
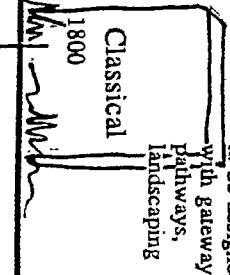
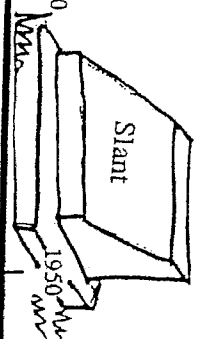
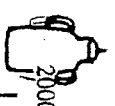
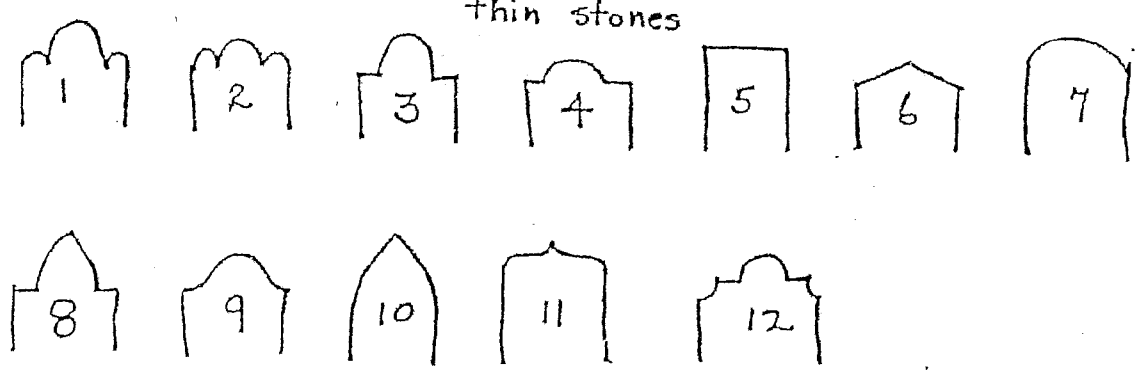


# TOMBSTONE TIMELINE

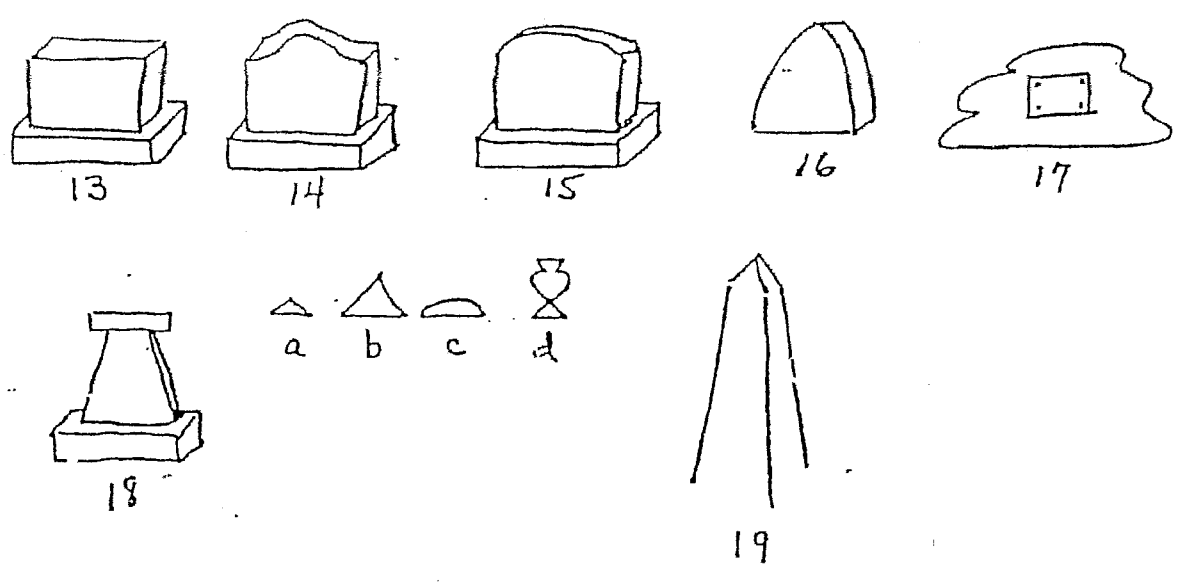
<p>material commonly used</p>	<p>Fieldstone 1650</p>  <p>Cemeteries very simple, without special landscaping</p> <p>rough cut granite boulders dressed on one side (1650)</p> <p>boulders dressed on one side (1650)</p> <p>slate easier to carve than boulders (1660)</p> <p>brown sandstone in CT</p>	<p>1700</p>  <p>Arch</p> <p>1750</p> <p>slate-usually gray (1770s-1830s)</p> <p>sandstone-red or rust layers</p> <p>carved (two stone layers)</p> <p>late 1700s-marble first used, thru 1920</p> <p>soapstone (1780s-1830s)</p> <p>soft, dark slate</p> <p>harder grayish-blue slate (weathers poorly)</p>
<p>carving style commonly used</p>	<p>simple inscriptions</p> <p>sometimes initials only</p> <p>dates begin to appear in 1640</p> <p>sometimes no carving</p> <p>deeply cut horizontal rules used for inscriptions (guide lines)</p> <p>guidelines out of style</p> <p>Roman lettering used from now thru 18th century (easier to read even after weathering)</p>	<p>1800</p>  <p>Classical</p> <p>Cemeteries begin to be designed with gateways, pathways, landscaping</p> <p>1850</p> <p>Italian lettering in fashion</p> <p>1840-Roman lettering in style again</p>
<p>material commonly used</p>	<p>1900</p>  <p>Slant</p> <p>1950</p> <p>granite</p> <p>cast metal</p>	<p>2000</p>  <p>Cremation Urn</p> <p>?</p>
<p>carving style commonly used</p>	<p>some raised letters</p>	<p>laser carving</p>

Common Headstone Shapes

thin stones



thick stones



Source: Oregon Historic Cemetery Association, Inc. GATE Program

# Reading Weathered Marble Gravestones Requires a Knowledge of the Carver's Craft

John E. Sterling

Most gravestones in the United States in the 19th century were made of marble. These gravestones are proving to be temporary markers. Thomas Meierding discussed gravestone weathering at the 1995 Association for Gravestone Studies conference. Dr. Meierding detailed how sulfur dioxide, from coal burning, is the main enemy of upright stones and acid rain is the enemy of horizontal gravestones. My experience in Rhode Island is that 2% to 4% of the marble stones are unreadable, even with the techniques I will detail here. That number is somewhat lower in rural areas that had less exposure to sulfur dioxide. In some areas where sulfur dioxide pollution was higher or where poor quality marble was used, the percentage of unreadable gravestones can be as high as 50%.

I have been working since 1990 with a group of volunteers whose goal is to record every gravestone in the state of Rhode Island. To date we have recorded 435,000 gravestones in 3070 cemeteries. I have seen many techniques used to read gravestones, but two stand out as far and away the best. The mirror techniques where sunlight is redirected at a raking angle over the gravestone to highlight the carving with shadows is the quickest and easiest, where bright sunlight is available. The other technique works well on gravestones in cemeteries deep in the woods where sunlight can not be reflected on the stone with a mirror, a natural bristle brush and

plain water works well. By wetting and brushing the face of the gravestone the dirt on the surface is moved into the letters while the surface starts to lighten. Most marble gravestones can be read directly with one of these techniques, but some have worn so severely that unless you know how the carver has made the numbers they can be confused.

READING MARBLE GRAVESTONE NUMBERS NEWLY CARVED NUMBERS COMPARED TO WEATHERED NUMBERS	
NEWLY CARVED NUMBERS <b>14</b>	NEWLY CARVED NUMBERS <b>235</b>
100-200 YEARS OF WEATHERING <b>11</b>	100-200 YEARS OF WEATHERING <b>235</b>
CHART 1	CHART 2
NEWLY CARVED NUMBERS <b>690</b>	NEWLY CARVED NUMBERS <b>78</b>
100-200 YEARS OF WEATHERING <b>690</b>	100-200 YEARS OF WEATHERING <b>78</b>
CHART 3	CHART 4

## A FEW WORDS ABOUT EPITAPHS

I could be satisfied ignoring everything else a cemetery has to show and just concentrating on epitaphs, and maybe some of your students will be captivated by them also. Sometimes they are so hard to read on the old marble stones, or so buried in the grass that it is almost like playing detective to try and decipher the phrase or line of a poem.

My favorite is a chilling one which I first read in a cemetery in Glover, VT on the grave of Ellen Patterson, who died of Black Measles in 1863 at the age of 18 and whose marker is one in a line of her siblings who died in close succession. The epitaphs seemed to be harsher with each new death. Ellen's epitaph—almost a riddle—is seen in similar versions in many other graveyards:

Stop my friends as you pass by  
 As you are now, so once was I  
 As I am now, so you will be  
 Prepare for death and follow me.

Janet Greene's book, *Epitaphs to Remember* (Alan C. Hood & Company, Brattleboro, VT, 1962) originally published as *Over Their Dead Bodies*, organizes trends in epitaphs over time. Students will find her categorizing helpful:

	<u>time period in New England</u>	<u>what you will tend to find in inscriptions</u>
through 1775	pioneer and colonial life	inscriptions reflect piety, church-going, thrift and hardwork— carvings warn of inevitability of death
1776 - 1815	new religious revival	American Revolution documented on stones, but not War of 1812 inscriptions talk about eternal peace and reunions in heaven.
1816 - 1870	great social change and humanitarianism	epitaphs written to soothe the bereaved
1871 - present	decline of Yankee epitaph as declaration of belief	today, usually only name and date recorded

Ms. Greene's book records over 200 epitaphs from around New England, many from Vermont.

Other Resources:

- Epitaph and Icon* by George & Nelson (Parnassus Imprints, Orleans, MA, 1983)
- The Best of Gravestone Humor* by Louis Schafer (Sterling Publishing Co., NY, 1990)
- Famous Last Words* by Gyles Brandreth (Sterling Publishing Co., NY, )



Compiled by Joan Alexander, 1996

## FOLKLORE & SUPERSTITIONS

I have a memory of a ritual during car rides in the fifties: when we passed by a cemetery, we had to touch the car ceiling with both hands and lift our feet off the floor, or something bad would happen. What was the "something bad"? I don't remember! Your students may know this superstition, and others.

Following are some superstitions and folklore about death and cemeteries. See how many your students have heard of, and then have them add to the list.

### Signs of death:

- if a black beetle crawls up your sleeve
- if a picture suddenly falls from the wall
- if a cow moos after midnight
- if you hear an owl outside your window seven days in a row
- if a stopped clock suddenly begins to strike
- if a bird flies into the house and sits on a bed
- if a bird pecks at the side of a house
- if a very ill person "picks at the bed covers"
- if you kill a redbird or a bluebird
- if a rooster crows in the doorway, or a hen crows
- if you dream of a cemetery
- if you hear 3 knocks on a door & no one's there (signifies the sound of nails closing a coffin)

### Bad luck signs:

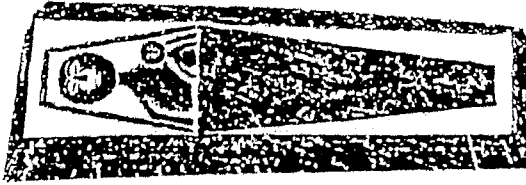
- if you step on a grave
- if you carry anything (flowers or other items) out of a graveyard, if the item does not belong to you
- if you desecrate or damage a cemetery in any way
- if a gravedigger does not stay to see the grave filled and covered
- if you collide with a hearse or stop a funeral procession
- if you see a funeral procession. If you count the cars, worse still.

### Wondering when your time will come?

- to find out, on New Year's Eve at midnight, go into a dark room and look in the mirror.  
If you see a coffin, you will die within the next year.
- sing this jump rope song:  
Apples, peaches, pumpkin pie  
How many years before I die  
One year, two years, three, four  
(Jump rope until you miss!)

### Bibliography

- Pioneer Superstitions* Ferne Shelton, ed., Hutcraft, High Point, NC, 1969  
*Telling Fortunes* Alvin Schwartz, Harper & Row, 1990



## Cemetery Symbology

*In her book Lessons from the dead: The Graveyard as a Classroom for the Study of the Life Cycle (Highly Specialized Productions, 1979), Roberta Halpern explains that one of the reasons symbols were used on gravestones so much in colonial America was that one could be sure that pictures would be "read" more universally than words. During Colonial times, Halpern says, symbols were designed to honor the dead, and to teach the living a moral lesson, reminding them to live life to the fullest, "for death lurked everywhere." The use of symbols on gravestones remained strong through Victorian times, but they reflected society's move to viewing life and death in less harsh, more romantic tones, with a "gentler form of mourning imagery" and symbols that suggest "resurrection and everlasting life." (Richard Mayer in the foreword to Stories in Stone, 2003) The use of symbols dropped sharply during the 1900s, but lately is back in vogue. Symbols carved on gravestones today often depict the deceased's earthly work, interests and pastimes.*

**Acorn:** strength and independence

**Alpha & Omega (AΩ):** beginning and end; symbolizing that Jesus is the beginning and the end

**Anchor:** Christian symbol for hope and steadfastness; an attribute of St. Nicholas, patron saint of seamen

**Angels:** heaven

**Ant:** Christian industry

**Anvil:** martyrdom

**Apple:** sin, Eve

**Arch:** the victory of life, triumph

**Ark:** church, salvation

**Arrow (dart, javelin):** death threat posed by presence of Native Americans; in the hands of Deaths' imps; martyrdom; a quiver of arrows: warlike

**Armor:** protection from evil

**Axe:** Death the reaper

**Baby or child, sleeping:** deceased child, innocence, purity

**Banner:** victory, triumph

**Basket:** fertility; maternal

**Bat:** of the Underworld; death; misfortune

**Battle axe:** martyrdom

**Bed or Cradle, empty:** loss, anguish

**Bee/ Beehive:** resurrection, risen Christ, chastity

**Bells:** tolling for the dead, call to worship

**Bird:** an old symbol of the soul, the spirit; bird in vine: soul partaking of celestial food

**Book:** Bible, wisdom

**Breast:** divine milk needed to nourish the soul (see Gourd)

**Brick walls:** Garden of Paradise

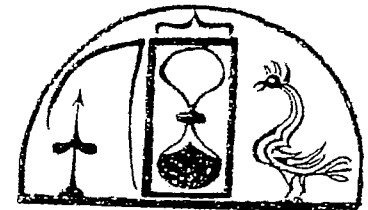
**Butterfly:** resurrection

**Candle:** life work, activity; extinguished before sleep; Christ, devotion

**Candle stand:** located beside bed, held candle and books

**Candle snuffer:** putting out the light of life; sometimes by Death's imps

**Celtic cross:** the circle on it symbolizes eternity



**Chain:** with one broken link: loss of member of family; if three connecting links with letters IOOF or FLT, with eye, handshake: member of Independent Order of Odd Fellows

**Chalice:** wine, divine fluid; if R with three chain links: Rebekah Lodge

**Circle:** eternity or earth

**Chi Rio:** the first two Greek letters of the word Christ: chi (x) and rho (p)

**Cherubs;** servants of God; divine wisdom or justice; happy; innocent

**Clerical trappings:** occupation of deceased; station in life

**Clock:** the passage of time

**Clouds:** transition to afterlife; sometimes with God's hand emerging from clouds

**Coat of Arms:** a mark of status or wealth; genealogical origin

**Coffin:** a primitive literal symbol; a familiar symbol of death

**Columns:** supporting the roof of heaven or sky; a broken column: broken life, sorrow (also see Door)

**Compass:** the deceased was a member of the Society of the Freemasons

**Corn:** basic substance of religious life; body and blood of Christ

**Cornucopia,** or Horn of Plenty: a full life

**Cross:** traditional Christian symbol, rejected with other elements of European Anglicanism

**Cross with rays of rising sun:** glory

**Cross with winding sheet:** descent from the cross

**Crossed bones:** schema to represent the place occupied by death in life

**Crown:** reward of the faithful; the glory of death as purification; righteousness; a popular symbol in the Conn. River Valley Crown and Scepter: kingly authority of the Lord

**Crown on cross:** sovereignty of Christ

**Crozier** (staff with cross or crook at end): bishop

**Cup:** Eucharist

**Death heads:** Puritan symbol of immortality; first generation of decorative art

**Demon (Imp):** humanized death form serving the forces of Death; rarely seen after early 1700s

**Door:** overall shape of stone resembles door with columns; portal; entrance to a new life; Symbol of House of Dead; passage to the unknown

**Dove:** Christian constancy and devotion; Holy Ghost, peace, gentleness, innocence; purity, seven doves: Holy Spirit; if R with dove and half moon: Rebekah Lodge

**Drapery over anything:** sorrow, mourning

**Eagle:** fierceness; ascension, USA; if with initials FOE indicates member of the Fraternal order of Eagles; if eagle has its wings spread and holding arrows and an olive branch in its feet, has a Celtic cross behind it, deceased was a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars

**Earth:** life, new life

**Elk:** with letters BPOE: member of Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks

**Eye:** God's eye; watching over good Christians

**Father Time:** the passing of time; the inevitability of death

**Feathers:** the soul's flight to heaven



- Fig:** prosperity, happiness  
**Fish:** Christian plentifulness  
**Figure arising,** often from tomb: rebirth  
**Finger:** pointing up: to heaven, or down: God reaching down for the interned  
**Flame from urn:** essence of Christian life; eternity  
**Flower:** the life of humans; frailty of life; symbol of impermanence; if broken, or shown budding: life cut down in bloom; if a bouquet of flowers: sweet thoughts, a tribute  
**Acanthus:** one of the oldest of all ornamental motifs in classical architecture... associated with the rocky ground of most ancient Greek cemeteries, heavenly gardens  
**Calla Lily:** marriage, beauty  
**Daffodil:** beauty, deep regard  
**Daisy:** youth, innocence, gentleness, purity  
**Dogwood:** Christianity, resurrection  
**Ivy:** friendship, faithfulness, undying affection, eternal life, Christian constancy  
**Hollyhock:** Nature, ambition, productiveness, fruitfulness  
**Honeysuckle:** bonds of love, fidelity, affection, resurrection  
**Iris:** eloquence, protection, a message  
**Laurel:** Special achievement, distinction, triumph, success  
**Lily:** purity, the flower of the Virgin  
**Lily of the Valley:** purity, humility, happiness, humility, purity, children, brides  
**Lotus:** regeneration, youth, immortality  
**Morning Glory:** farewell, mortality, departure  
**Narcissus:** death of youth; memory; beauty; music  
**Olive Branch:** peace  
**Pansy:** meditation, thoughtful recollection, remembrance  
**Poppy:** eternal sleep, consolation, rest, peace  
**Rose:** love; simplicity; modesty; mother  
**Thistle:** Independence, earthly sorrow, Scottish heritage  
**Shamrock:** Trinity, Irish heritage  
**Passion flower:** Christ's suffering, the Passion and the Crucifixion  
**Wood Anemone:** immortality, resurrection  
**Fleur de lies:** Virgin, Trinity  
**Fox:** cunning; cruelty  
**Frog:** resurrection  
**Fruit:** the product of growth; the result of a living a righteous life; abundance



- Gate:** death, departure from life, entrance to heaven; death is thought as the "gateway" to heaven  
**Garlands:** the victory of a pure life  
**Goats:** nonbelievers  
**Gourd:** also squash: appear in pairs, scriptures, church ministry; deliverance from grief (see also Breasts)  
**Grapes:** blood and body of Christ; wine; divine fluid  
**Griffin or Gryphon,** lion, with head and wings of an eagle: ancient Greek symbol of superiority, invincibility, wisdom, watchfulness





**Hammer and Nails:** crucifixion

**Hands:** embracing rebirth, embracing life; if in handshake: God welcoming to heaven; if hands wearing male/female clothing: marriage

**Hand of God:** extended in blessing; often emerging from clouds, sometimes with a crown or enclosed in a quarter-foil, or with rays of glory; having the index and middle finger extended is the Latin form; Greek form shows thumb holding down the ring finger to simulate the letters IC XC, a contraction of Jesus' name

**Hands open,** with touching thumbs: deceased was a member of the priestly line (Jewish stones)

**Hart** (a male deer): faithful; thirsting for God; Christ slaying Satan

**Harp or Lyre:** heavenly music; joy; if with broken string: no longer functions

**Heart:** soul in bliss (Colonial times); romantic love (Victorian times – present); soul's love of God; charity, the soul, often with wings, or being flown to heaven: a symbol of the Trinity; if in the middle of Death's head, triumphant soul emerging out of death

**Heart with anchor and cross:** faith, hope and charity

**Heavenly Bodies:** Moons, Suns, Stars: heavenly home of blessed rising soul to heaven, setting an end of life on earth, beginning in heaven

**HIS:** shortened form of Jesus; Latin derivation of IHC, meaning *Jesus, the Savior of Men*

**Hourglass:** the inevitability of the passage of time, sometimes with wings of skeleton on top

**Incense:** worship, prayer, adoration

**IHC:** monogram for Christ using first 3 letters of the Greek spelling of "Christ"

**INRI:** Jesus

**Ivy:** friendship, immortality, memory

**K, large in a circle:** member of the Kiwanis service club

**Keys (crossed):** St. Peter

**Ladder:** passion, Jacob, aspiration

**Lamb:** Christ; innocence; most popular on children's graves; if lying down: suffering of Christ; if standing: the risen Christ

**Lamb with banner:** resurrection

**Lamp:** word of God; truth; knowledge; wisdom; good works; if extinguished: death; guiding light;

**Lance:** martyrdom

**Laurel:** victory over death

**Leaf:** happiness

**Lighthouse:** safety; final port; watchfulness

**Lion:** strength, bravery and courage; royalty; if two lion heads back to back with a circle with an L in center: member of the Lions service club

**Mermaid:** representing the dualism of Christ: half God, half man

**Military trappings:** occupation of deceased or station in life

**Moon:** renewed life (crescent moon: Virgin)



**Moose head with antlers:** member of the Moose service club

**Nails, three:** crucifixion of Christ

**Pall (pick ax):** gravedigger's tool

**Palm of Victory:** righteous person; salvation

**Panther:** the Lord's power to attract all men

**Peacock:** fabled incorruptibility of flesh, resurrection, beauty of soul, eternal life; immortality; vanity and pride

**Pear:** Christ's love for people

**Pelican:** ancient symbol of atonement; feeds young with own blood

**Phoenix:** immortality; baptism

**Pitcher:** a symbol associated with the Levites who washed the hands of priests prior to religious service

**Pick and Shovel:** implements of death; Death's reminder (see Pall)

**Pineapple:** hospitality

**Pomegranate:** resurrection; immortality; unity

**Rings, interlocked:** marriage

**Rock:** steadfastness; stability

**Rosary:** devotion to Mary

**Rosette:** a soul effigy

**Rooster:** calling all to attention of passing of life, vigilance; St. Peter awakens from his fall from grace; awakening to repentance



**Scales:** equality and justice; Archangel Michael is often portrayed holding a pair of scales to weigh the souls of the departed; may indicate law profession

**Scallops shell:** humans' earthly pilgrimage; used as utensil; decorative border; a symbol of birth and resurrection; a traditional symbol of Puritans

**Scroll:** the law; Scriptures, wisdom; if on Jewish grave: divine presence

**Scythe:** passing of time; cuts down life

**Serpent with tail in his mouth:** ancient symbol of eternity; unity

**Sheep:** Christian

**Shell;** resurrection, life everlasting; man's earthly pilgrimage; conch shell: female reproductive tract, wealth

**Shrine:** the knowledge of antiquity

**Shield with Celtic cross placed like an X behind it:** member of the Knights of Columbus

**Ship:** occupation of deceased; humans' journey through life; hardship; an early symbol of the church, carrying the Christian across the wild sea of life to the port of eternal joy, heaven

**Shoe:** loss of a child

**Sickle:** Death the reaper

**Skeleton:** Death figure

**Skeleton with laurel:** Death as conqueror

**Skull:** sometimes winged; sin; gradually became more humanized; with crossbones: mortality of humans; on pillar: triumph of life

**Snake:** sin; Satan, the fall of humans

**Soul Effigies:** souls in flight to heaven

**Spade:** grave digger's tool

**Squirrel with nut:** religious meditation; Christian forethought; spiritual striving

**Stag:** see Hart

**Stars:** the hope of a new life

**Strawberry:** righteousness; humility; God or sun

**Sun:** the renewal of life; symbol of glorified souls; sun rising: resurrection; sun setting: death; **Winged Sun:** an ancient Egyptian symbol of divine protection

**Sword:** martyrdom; courage; warfare

**Tassels:** homelike, comfortableness; popular during Victorian times

**Torch:** if elevated: resurrection; if lowered: death; if inverted: end of family line

**Three** (points, leaves, whatever): Trinity

**Trees:** tree of life: God's family in a new land; paradise; symbol of human life; if springing from tomb or urn: rebirth; if fallen on a stone: death of a person

**Almond:** favor from God; Virgin birth

**Cedar:** strong faith, length of days; success

**Connecticut Marriage Tree:** (these trees were planted by newlyweds; uprooting, separation)

**Cypress:** sorrow; death, eternal life, Roman symbol for mourning

**Evergreen:** immortality

**Hawthorn:** springtime, hope

**Oak:** supernatural power and strength; eternity, honor, liberty, hospitality

**Olive:** peace; healing; faith

**Palm:** victory; martyrdom; reward of the righteous; peace

**Pine and cones:** boldness, fidelity, stability, fertility, healing

**Willow:** grief; death; nature's lament for the departed soul; carried at Masonic funerals

**Yew:** immortality

**Triangle/Trefoil/ Three interwoven circles:** Father, Son and Holy Spirit

**Trumpet:** a call to the glory of resurrection

**Urn:** death of the flesh; shrine or temple; portal through which soul passes to immortality; soul, derived from classicism and classical revival; draped urn: sorrow

**Urn with flame on top:** soul rising from earth

**Umbrella:** protection of life by religion

**Vines:** God's seek replanted in the soil of the New World; wine; divine fluid

**Vine and corn:** blood and body of Christ

**Wheat:** Deceased had a full life; harvest; prosperity

**Wheel (winged):** Holy Spirit

**Wreath:** mourning; victory





**Yoke:** burden bearing; service; patient

Compiled by Joan Alexander, 1996, and revised in 2006

Resources used to compile this list:

- "The Art, History and Tradition of Monuments: Teaching Aids from the Monument Industry Information Bureau"* (1983, Monument Builders of North America, Chicago)
- A Cemetery Survey* by Mulligan and Trask (1970, Nova Scotia Museum Publication, Halifax)
- The Early American Gravestone as Primitive Art by Richard J. Friswell, 88 Beech St., Belmont, MA 02178
- "Gone but not Forgotten"* by Myra S. Weatherby (September/October 1985, GTC)
- Historic Cemeteries: Where Stones Talk* by Kay Atwood (1998, Medford Parks & Recreation, Oregon)
- Interpretation of Symbols on Gravestones* by Barbara Rotundo
- Lessons from the Dead by Roberta Halporn (1979, Highly Specialized Promotions)
- Magic Day: Plotting among the Plots* by Wall, Crump, Del Grande, and Squires (Indiana University Southeast)
- Memorial Symbolism, Epitaphs and Design Types (1947, American Monument Association, NY)
- Underfoot by David Weiztman (1976, Scribners, NY)
- Your Guide to Cemetery Research by Sharon DeBartolo Carmack (2002, Betterway Books, Cincinnati)
- Symbols, The Universal Language (1982, American Monument Association, Ohio)

### Looking for more?

Stories in Stone, A Field Guide to Cemetery Symbolism and Iconography by Douglas Keister (2004, Gibbs Smith, Salt Lake City) devotes over 250 pages to cemetery symbols and their history, and is beautifully illustrated





Step By Step

**ESTIMATING A BIRTH DATE FROM A TOMBSTONE INSCRIPTION  
OR  
WHY DIDN'T THEY TEACH ME THIS KIND OF MATH IN SCHOOL?**

**Example #1**

Let's say the ancestor's death date is recorded on the tombstone as 25 May 1842, age 36 years, 2 months, and 10 days. Here's a formula for calculating the probable date of birth:

1842 (year of death)	5th month (May)	25th day
<u>- 36 years old</u>	<u>- 2 months</u>	<u>- 10 days</u>
1806	3rd month	15th day

The ancestor was born probably on 15 March 1806.

**Example #2**

Now let's suppose the ancestor's death date is recorded on the headstone as 25 May 1842, but is age 60 years, 8 months, and 5 days. Follow the same formula, but now you'll have to "borrow" some months to get the answer.

1842 (year of death)	5th month (May)	25th day
- 60 years	- 8 months	- 5 days

Work the problem from left to right as you would any math problem. Here, you will need to borrow 12 months from 1842, so instead of 5 months, it becomes 17 months.

1 (borrowing 12 months) 5 + 12 = 17

1842-	-5th month (May)	25th day
<u>- 60 years</u>	<u>- 8 months</u>	<u>- 5 days</u>
1781	9	20

The ancestor was born probably on 20 September 1781.

**Example #3**

Now let's make it a little harder. The ancestor's death date on the tombstone is 25 May 1842, age 45 years, 8 months, and 28 days. This time, you also need to borrow days from a full month. But several months have 30 days, and some have 31, not to mention February. Borrow the number of days in a month from the month given: May has 31 days, so you will borrow 31 days. Then you will have to borrow 12 months from 1842.

1	12 mo + 4 = 16	31 days + 25 = 56
1842-	-5th month	-25th day

So, your math problem is now:

1841 year	16 months	56 days
<u>- 45</u>	<u>- 8</u>	<u>- 28</u>
1796	8	28

The ancestor was born probably on 28 August 1796.

## Stone Glossary

excerpts from *A Graveyard Preservation Primer*, by Lynette Strangstad

**Brownstone:** A trade term applied to ferruginous dark brown and reddish brown sandstone quarried and extensively used for building in the eastern United States during the middle and late nineteenth century. Most later use has been for renovation, repair, or additions to structures in which the stone was originally used. In gravestones, most commonly used as bases, although common in some areas, such as the Connecticut River Valley, for tablestones as well.

**Delamination:** Separation of layers of stone along bedding planes.

**Exfoliation.** Peeling or scaling of stone surfaces caused by chemical or physical weathering.

**Flaking:** A term commonly used regarding gravestones to indicate minor delamination of surfaces or otherwise unsound stone which easily peels off in small sheets or layers.

**Granite:** Geologically, igneous rock with crystals or grains of visible size consisting mainly of quartz and the sodium or potassium feldspar. In building stone and gravestones, crystalline silicate rock with visible grains. The commercial term includes gneiss and igneous rocks that are not granite in the strictest sense.

**Igneous Rocks:** Rock formed by change of the molten material called magma to the solid state. The igneous rocks are one of three generic classes of rocks (igneous, sedimentary, and metamorphic). Various igneous rocks generally termed granite if coarse grained, are used for building stone and gravestones.

**Laminated Stone:** Stone consisting of thin sheets; stone built up in layers such as slate.

**Limestone:** rock of sedimentary origin composed principally of calcite or dolomite or both. Commonly used in gravestones and tomb structures, in some cases considered to be marble.

**Marble:** Geologically, a metamorphic rock made up largely of calcite or dolomite. As used commercially, the term includes many dense limestones and some rock dolomite. Numerous minerals may be present in minor to significant amounts in marble, and their presences and distribution account for much of the distinctive appearance that many marbles possess. The predominant stone for gravestones in the nineteenth century.

**Metamorphic Rock:** Rock altered in appearance, density, and crystalline structure and in some cases mineral composition, by high temperature or high pressure or both. Slate is derived from shale, quartzite from quartz sandstone and true marble from limestone.

**Sandstone:** Sedimentary rock composed of sand-sized grains naturally cemented by mineral material. In most sandstone used for building and gravestones, quartz grains predominate.

**Schist:** Metamorphic rock with continuous foliation. Splits along foliation and is occasionally found in gravestone use.

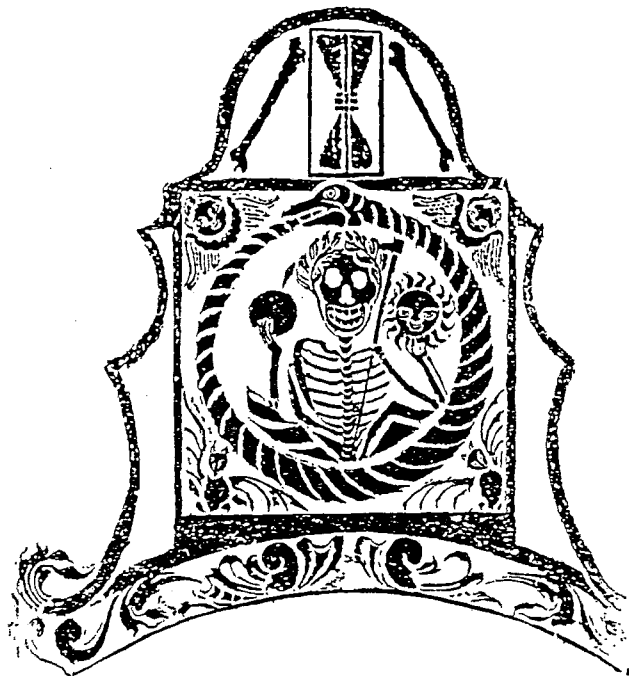
**Sedimentary Rock:** Rock formed from materials deposited as sediments, in the sea, in fresh water, or on the land. The materials are transported to their site of deposition by such forces as running water, wind or moving ice. They may deposit as fragments or by precipitation from solution. Limestone and sandstone are the sedimentary rocks most used for building and gravestones.

**Shale:** A rock of clay origin, easily split into layers. Occasionally found in gravestones.

**Slate:** A hard, brittle metamorphic rock consisting mainly of clay minerals and characterized by good cleavage that is unrelated to the bedding in the earlier shale or clay from which it formed. A popular gravestone material of the eighteen century, particularly in coastal areas. Many of the best-preserved examples of gravestone art are found in slate, and extremely stable stone.

**Soapstone:** Massive soft rock that contains a high proportion of talc. Occasionally used in gravestones.

**Spall:** In stone, to flake or split away through frost action or pressure. As a noun, a chip or flake of stone.







## Glossary of Useful Terms

AE: An abbreviation for Aetatis, or years of life.

B.P.O.E.: Benevolent Protective Order of Elks, a fraternal organization.

Cairn: A mound of stones marking a burial place.

Cemetery: An area set aside for burial of the dead; in Latin American culture known as "campo santo," or holy field.

Cenotaph: A monument, usually of imposing scale, erected to commemorate one whose burial remains are at a separate location; literally "empty tomb."

Chapel: A place of worship or meditation in a cemetery or mausoleum, either a freestanding building or a room set apart for commemorative services.

Cinerary urn: A receptacle for cremation remains, or ashes, in the shape of a vase.

Columbarium: A vault or structure for storage of cinerary urns.

Consort: A woman who predeceases her husband.

Crypt: An enclosure for a casket in a mausoleum or underground chamber, as beneath a church.

C.S.A.: Confederate States Army.

D.S.P.: (Latin- *decessit sine prole*) Died without issue (children).

D.V.P.: (Latin- *decessit vita patris*) Died in father's lifetime.

D.Y.: Died young.

D.A.R.: Daughter of the American Revolution.

Epitaph: An inscription on a monument in memory of the person or persons buried there. Also a short statement in memory of a deceased person.

Exedra: A permanent open air masonry bench with high back, usually semicircular in plan, patterned after the porches or alcoves of classical antiquity where philosophical discussions were held; in cemeteries, used as an element of landscape design and as a type of tomb monument.

Footstone: A stone marking the foot of a grave.

G.A.R.: Grand Army of the Republic, or Union Army.

Graveyard: An area set aside for burial of the dead; a common burying ground of a church or community.

Graveyard Shift: A work shift that runs during the early morning hours, such as from midnight to 8:00 a.m.

Headstone: A memorial stone set at the head of a grave, usually inscribed with demographic information, epitaphs, or both; sometimes decorated with a carved motif.

H.S.: (Latin- *hic situs or sepultus*) Here is buried.

Inter: To bury or put the dead into a grave or tomb.

I.O.O.F.: Independent Order of Odd Fellows, a fraternal organization.

Mausoleum: A large, stately tomb, or a building housing a tomb or tombs.

Memento mori: (Latin- "remember death")

Memorial: Something that is a reminder of some event or person, such as an arch, a column, a statue or a holiday.

Memorial park: A cemetery of the 20th century cared for in perpetuity by a business or nonprofit corporation that is generally characterized by open expanses of greensward with flush or other regulated gravemarkers; the earlier manifestation, in the last half of the 19th century, was called a "lawn" cemetery.

Military cemetery: A burial ground established for war casualties, veterans and eligible dependents. Those established by the Federal government include national cemeteries, post cemeteries, soldiers' lots, Confederate and Union plots, and American cemeteries in foreign countries. Many States also have established cemeteries for veterans.

Monolith: A large, vertical stone gravemaker having no base or cap.

Monument: A structure such as a building, arch, pillar, statue, tomb or stone set up to honor a person or an event.

Morning: To show grief for the dead.

National cemetery: One of 130 burial grounds established by the Congress of the United States since 1862 for interment of armed forces servicemen and women whose last service ended honorable.

O.E.S.: Order of Eastern Star, an organization for women.

Obelisk: A four-sided, tapering shaft having a pyramidal point; a gravemaker type popularized by romantic taste for classical imagery.

OBIT.: Died.

OBIT SINE PROLE: Died without children.

Ossuary: A receptacle for the bones of the dead.

Pet cemetery: An area set aside for burial of cherished animals.

Plot: A small piece of ground.

Potter's Field: A place where unknown or poor (destitute) persons are buried. The term comes from a Biblical reference: Matthew 27.7

Receiving tomb: A vault where the dead may be held until a final burial place is prepared; also receiving vault.

Relict: A widow.

"Rural" cemetery: A burial place characterized by spacious landscaped grounds and romantic commemorative monuments established in a rural settling in the period of the young republic and at the dawn of the Victorian era; so called for the movement inspired by the American model, Mount Auburn Cemetery (1831) in the environs of Boston; a cemetery developed in this tradition. The term is used with quotation marks throughout the guidance to distinguish this distinctive landscaped type from other kinds of burying grounds occurring in the country side.

S.A.R.: Sons of the American Revolution.

Sarcophagus: A stone coffin, often inscribed or decorated with sculpture.

Sepulcher: A place of burial, a tomb or a grave.

Sexton: Traditionally, a digger of graves and supervisor of burial in the churchyard; commonly, a cemetery superintendent.

Stele: An upright stone or commemorative slab, commonly inscribed or embellished

Tombstone: A stone or monument inscribed that marks a grave, a gravestone.

Tumulus: A mound of earth protecting a tomb chamber; in the ancient world, important tumuli were encircled by drum-like constructions of stone.

V.F.W.: Veterans of Foreign Wars.

W.R.C.: Women's Relief Corps.



Sources:

Stranger Stop and Cast An Eye, National Registrar, Perspectives,  
The Green Mountaineer

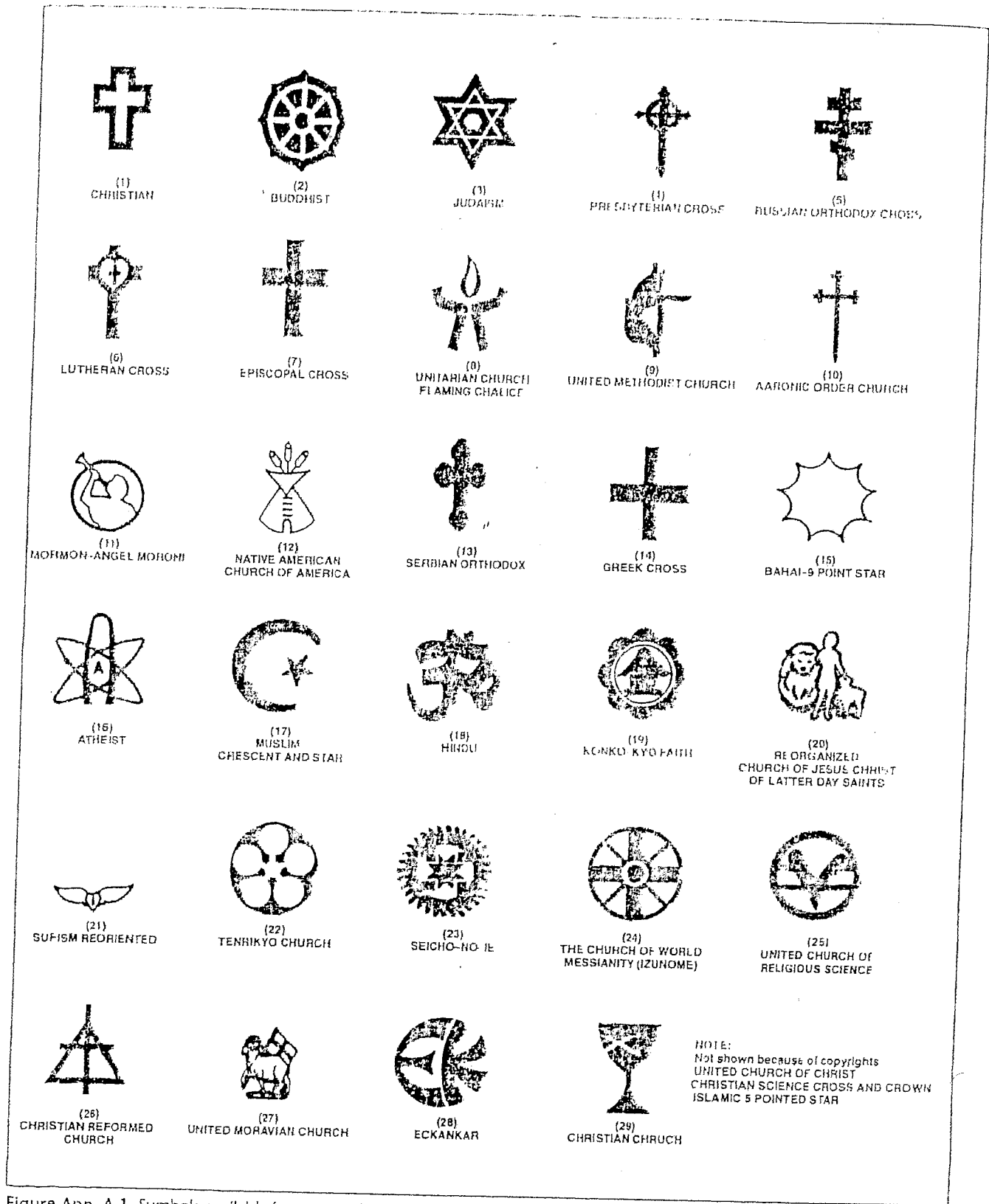
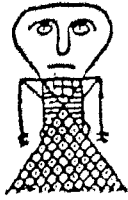


Figure App. A-1 Symbols available for veterans' markers.



## MAKING PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORDS OF GRAVESTONES

by Daniel and Jessie LieFarber

Old graveyards are excellent photographic subjects. They lend themselves to many types of photographs—scenic views of the yard, compositions of groups of stones, portraits of individual stones, and details of the decorative carving. Interest can be added to photographs of gravestones by taking advantage of various weather conditions such as fog, snow, even moonlight, as well as bright sunlight. To make an artistically exciting photograph in a graveyard, or anywhere else for that matter, there are no hard and fast rules. The opportunities and the limitations are in the eye and the imagination of the photographer.

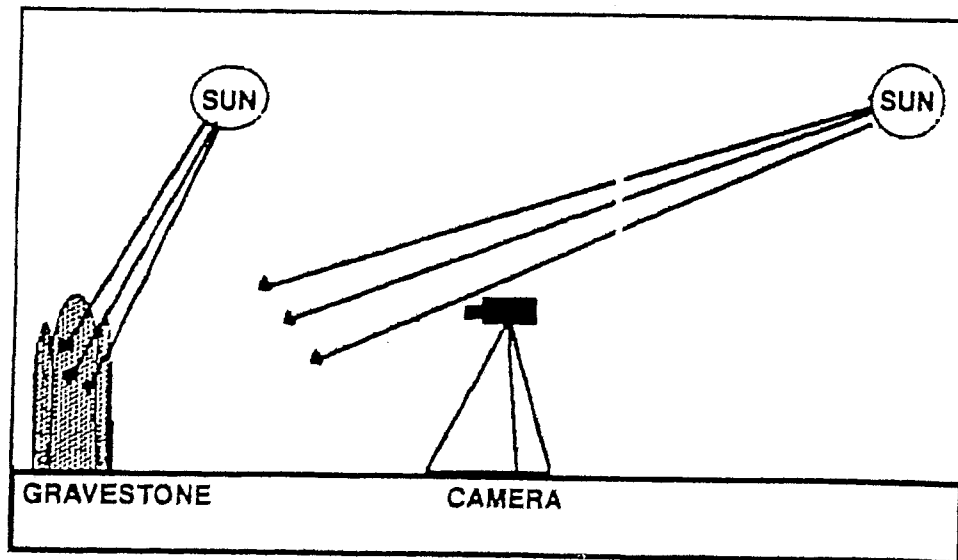
It is, however, quite a different matter to make a documentary photograph of an old gravestone, and it is about this kind of photograph that we are concerned here.

The object is to produce a sharp and sparkling photograph that shows the old stone in all its glory, its decorative carving standing boldly in relief, and its inscription clear and readable. To do this may seem to the novice to be a relatively simple matter. However, a glance at most documentary photographs made by beginners proves otherwise.

This paper presents techniques developed over a fifteen year period of photographing more than six thousand gravestones. The techniques are not difficult, but the work can be demanding. Good results require attention to detail and, above all, patience. If you have the patience and are willing to attend to the details outlined here, you will find that documenting gravestones photographically can be a fascinating, satisfying and worthwhile endeavor. The results are not only valuable records of America's early sculpture and early history, they can be handsome, often striking, works of art.

### Lighting

Documentary photographs of gravestones should be made in brilliant sunlight. Hazy or overcast conditions produce inferior results. The sunlight should fall across the face of the stone at a raking angle, that is, from the side or top of the stone at an angle of about 30 degrees. If the sun lights the face of the stone squarely from the front instead of at an angle, the lighting will be "flat" and the details of the stone's carving will not be clearly delineated. Too sharp an angle, on the other hand,



Excellent lighting

This lighting makes a poor picture

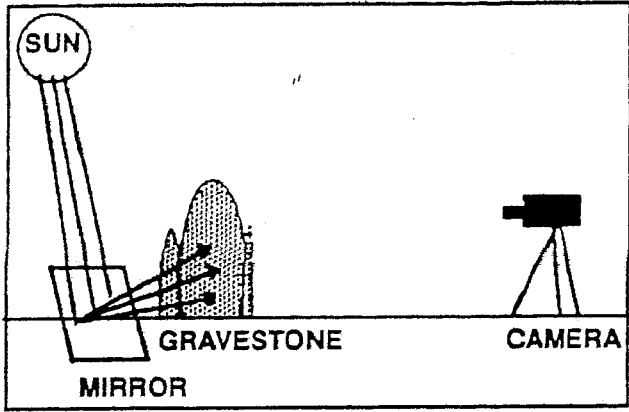
over-emphasizes the stone's rough surface, which tends to obscure and detract from more important features.

Generally speaking, sunlight strikes most old gravestones at a good raking angle for a period of about one and one-half hours a day, so the photographer must know when to be there. In most early New England burying grounds, the carved faces of the stones most often face west and are perfectly lighted from about 12:30 to 1:30 PM, standard time. Stones that face north are sunlit in the late afternoon in midsummer, and are in shade at all other times of the year. Stones that face south are favorably lit all day in midsummer but are flat-lighted from the front in the other seasons. Some stones, of course, are shaded by trees and buildings and are never lit by direct sunlight.

### Using a mirror

There is a way to eliminate the photographer's dependence on the position of the sun. By using a mirror to reflect the sun's light, the photographer can control the position of the light source.

Altering the position of the mirror alters the angle at which the reflected light strikes the stone. The photographer can experiment with a variety of lighting effects and choose the one that works best to bring out the decorative carving and the inscription. (It should be noted that a mirror is an



Reflecting the sun's light onto a shaded gravestone

essential piece of equipment for studying the carving on a stone and reading the inscription as well as photographing the stone. Viewing the face of the stone from a variety of lighting angles can bring out obscure details that would otherwise be overlooked.

The height of the mirror needed depends on the height of the subject to be photographed: the subject cannot be taller than the mirror. If only a detail of the decorative carving or only a few lines of inscription are to be photographed, a small mirror, perhaps one from a wall at home, will do. (For reading an eroded inscription, a hand mirror or even a pocket mirror may be all that is needed.) The mirror's width is not a problem as a very narrow mirror can rake a reflection across a broad-faced gravestone. Lightweight door mirrors adequate for lighting all but the tallest old gravemarkers are available in discount department stores for under \$25.

The photographer positions the mirror in full sun so that the reflected light rakes across the stone at the desired angle. If the yard is mostly shaded, the nearest spot of sun may be some distance from the stone to be photographed. In this situation, the mirror serves the photographer very well indeed. The mirror can be placed as much as 100 or so feet from the stone to pick up the available spot of sunlight and throw it onto the stone. Although it is usually possible to prop the mirror securely into

position, perhaps against another gravestone, it is helpful to have a partner mind the mirror while the photographer concentrates on the lighting effect on the stone. Or the mirror can be mounted onto a tripod.

There are innumerable opportunities to use a mirror to improve the lighting on gravestones. When the sun is lighting the back of the stones so that the carved faces are in shade, a mirror makes it possible to photograph these shaded stones. The same applies to stones shaded by trees and buildings. For the determined photographer, the mirror can solve other lighting problems. In the afternoon when the sun is no longer high enough to rake across the stones at the optimal angle and the light on the stones is "flat," the photographer can shade the stone and use a mirror to light the stone to best advantage. Sometimes the photographer's body can shade the stone. If not, a large dark cloth or cardboard can be used. Another helpful technique for the dedicated photographer with a shaded stone and only a far-away spot of sunlight is the use of two mirrors. One mirror is placed in the spot of sun so that it reflects the sun's light onto a second mirror that is positioned near the stone at the angle that reflects ideal lighting onto the stone.

Bear in mind that the mirror reflects light; it doesn't create light. A bright sunny day is still necessary. And note that the mirror is used to light shaded stones, not to improve the lighting on stones that are sunlit. Throwing a reflected light onto an already sunlit stone simply adds a second light source of equal strength. The resulting lighting is flat and diffused instead of the strong, shadow-producing light that is necessary for good definition of details. As mentioned previously, to use a mirror to improve the lighting on a sunlit stone, you must also eliminate the undesirable light by shading the stone.

### **Equipment**

Good photographs can be made with a 35mm camera. For black-and-white pictures a tri-X film shot at a shutter speed of 1/250th or 1/500th of a second produces good results. For color, Ektachrome ASA 200 can be used at 1/250th. At these speeds the careful photographer can hand-hold the camera. However, using a tripod has important advantages. The tripod assures camera stability. In addition, the tripod allows the photographer to shoot at slower shutter speeds. Slower shutter speeds allow smaller aperture openings, increasing a depth of focus.

Use a light meter. If a hand-held meter is used, it should be held close to the stone when making the reading so that light from only the stone and none from the background is included in the reading. If the camera is equipped with a meter, hold the camera close to the stone to make the reading.

### **Cleaning the stone**

If the stone requires cleaning, take care not to damage the stone in the process. Loose dirt and bird dung can be removed with a soft brush and water. A stiff bristle brush will damage the stone and should not be used. Nor should any chemicals such as detergents and bleaches be added to the water; the damage from chemicals absorbed by the stone can show up many years later. It is probably better to leave lichen on the stone, although it is sometimes possible to safely remove lichen from a sound stone with water and a wooden chisel-shaped stick.

### **Viewing the subject**

The stone should be positioned in the viewer so that the sides of the stone are parallel to the sides of the viewer. If the camera is pointed upward or downward, the stone will be distorted in the picture. Many old stones do not stand straight on a vertical line. To "straighten" a leaning stone requires tilting the camera to correspond with the lean.

Position the camera close enough to the stone to fill the picture unless there are specific background

details that should be included. By moving in very close to the stone, dramatic photographs can be made of carving details. How close a camera can be brought to a subject before it loses its ability to focus depends on the lens of the camera. This distance can be reduced by attaching a +1 portra lens in front of the camera lens.

**Background**

Give careful attention to the background. The area behind the stone can enhance the photograph or damage it. A busy, confused background or a discordant object such as a TV antenna can be distracting. Trees and other background objects may appear in the photograph to be growing out of the stone. People in the background tend to compete with the foreground subject for interest.

When the photographer tilts the camera to straighten a leaning stone, care must be taken to exclude vertical background objects such as telephone poles, trees and buildings; they will be tilted in the photograph. The background may be so dark or so bright and contrasty that the stone carving is not shown to best advantage. To deal with these kinds of problems, the photographer should experiment with altering the position of the camera. A slight change of the camera's position makes a big difference in the background and may improve the photograph tremendously.

**Using a backboard**

Although there are times when background details thoughtfully included can made an aesthetic or a documentary contribution to the photograph, there are also times when there is no specific need to document the background and when the photographer's interest is entirely in the stone. At these times, the photographer may decide to eliminate the background altogether. Photographing the stone in splendid isolation can enhance its beauty and produce spectacular results.

Eliminating the background is best accomplished by placing a backboard behind the stone being photographed. The backboard should not have a design or any cracks, folds or scratches to distract the viewer. It should not be so bright or so dark that it detracts from the gravestone. A material that admirably satisfies these requirements is Formica in any medium color. Gray should be avoided as it tends to merge with the color of the stone. The Formica should be mounted on 1/4 inch plywood, and it is helpful to have a hand-hold cut into the plywood. The board should be as large as manageable—limited probably by the size that will fit into a car. For a shop that can make such a board, look under "Kitchen Counters" in the yellow pages of the telephone book.

A companion can hold the backboard in place behind the stone, or it can be propped into place with a lightweight angle iron or a sturdy stick or pole. Formica scratches easily, but stains and scratches can be removed with furniture polish.

**Documenting an entire graveyard**

These instructions are directed to people who wish to make photographs of selected gravestones for artistic reasons or for their genealogical or other research. The photographer who is making a record of all the stones in a graveyard has some different and additional considerations that will not be dealt with here. There are, for example, ways to show the dimensions of each stone in the photograph as well as the direction in which it faces. There are ways to identify each stone with a number that can be read in the photograph.



The rubbing of gravestones must be conducted properly, with strict supervision and adequate materials.

*Gravestone rubbing reproduces the relief design of the surface of the gravestone. Years of outdoor exposure and acid rain have severely damaged old slate and marble gravestones making them fragile and often delicate to the touch.*

## Directions and Regulations for Gravestone Rubbing:

- 1.) Get permission from the cemetery.
- 2.) No running or jumping on stones or swinging or leaping from stone to stone. Serious damage to both visitors and stones could occur.
- 3.) All rubbings must be done under the direct supervision of a responsible adult. Children should not be allowed to rub stones unchaperoned. An adult must always be immediately present.
- 4.) Children under ten years of age should not rub stones even with supervision.
- 5.) Gravestone rubbings will be limited to sound stones only. Any stones that are cracked, split, spalling, flaking or have seams may not be rubbed. If a given stone appears fragile or unsound in any way, choose another stone.
- 6.) The best choice of stones for rubbing are slate stones in good condition with low-relief or incised carvings. These produce the best images on paper and are less easily damaged inadvertently.
- 7.) Avoid rubbing deeply carved stones. Such stones can be easily damaged and generally do not make good rubbings.
- 8.) Avoid rubbing marble or stones with coarse-grained textures, as coloring agents may bleed through paper onto stones.
- 9.) Cleaning shall be limited to dusting with a soft brush. NO WIRE BRUSHES. Do not attempt to remove lichens or moss that may be growing on the stones.
- 10.) Use a heavy grade paper so wax medium does not penetrate though onto the stone.
- 11.) Attach paper with masking tape to the back of the stone.
- 12.) The entire face of the stone shall be covered with paper held in place with masking tape.
- 13.) Use wax or lumber crayons. Do not use inks, felt marking pens, or fiberglass tip pens.
- 14.) Do not press hard when rubbing. Go over an area several times to darken it instead of pressing hard. Use short light strokes. Do small areas at a time. Complete the rubbing back in the classroom or at home by further coloring.
- 15.) All paper and tape must be removed from the stones and all rubbish will be disposed of and not left lying around. Leave the cemetery nicer and cleaner when you leave than when you arrived.

(Excerpts from A Gravestone Preservation Primer, AGS Rubbing Techniques, Perspectives.)

## A FEW WORDS ABOUT EPITAPHS

I could be satisfied ignoring everything else a cemetery has to show and just concentrating on epitaphs, and maybe some of your students will be captivated by them also. Sometimes they are so hard to read on the old marble stones, or so buried in the grass that it is almost like playing detective to try and decipher the phrase or line of a poem.

My favorite is a chilling one which I first read in a cemetery in Glover, VT on the grave of Ellen Patterson, who died of Black Measles in 1863 at the age of 18 and whose marker is one in a line of her siblings who died in close succession. The epitaphs seemed to be harsher with each new death. Ellen's epitaph—almost a riddle—is seen in similar versions in many other graveyards:

Stop my friends as you pass by  
As you are now, so once was I  
As I am now, so you will be  
Prepare for death and follow me.

Janet Greene's book, *Epitaphs to Remember* (Alan C. Hood & Company, Brattleboro, VT, 1962) originally published as *Over Their Dead Bodies*, organizes trends in epitaphs over time. Students will find her categorizing helpful:

	<u>time period in New England</u>	<u>what you will tend to find in inscriptions</u>
through 1775	pioneer and colonial life	inscriptions reflect piety, church-going, thrift and hardwork—carvings warn of inevitability of death
1776 - 1815	new religious revival	American Revolution documented on stones, but not War of 1812 inscriptions talk about eternal peace and reunions in heaven.
1816 - 1870	great social change and humanitarianism	epitaphs written to soothe the bereaved
1871 - present	decline of Yankee epitaph as declaration of belief	today, usually only name and date recorded

Ms. Greene's book records over 200 epitaphs from around New England, many from Vermont.

### Other Resources:

*Epitaph and Icon* by George & Nelson (Parnassus Imprints, Orleans, MA, 1983)  
*The Best of Gravestone Humor* by Louis Schafer (Sterling Publishing Co., NY, 1990)  
*Famous Last Words* by Gyles Brandreth (Sterling Publishing Co., NY, )



Compiled by Joan Alexander, 1996