

Common gravestone abbreviations

- AE, Æ, ae, æ (Latin: aetatis) = "age of"
- Arty. = Artillery
- B.P.O.E. = Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks
- Bn. = Battalion
- Brig. = Brigade
- Cav. = Cavalry
- D.A.R., S.A.R. = Daughters/Sons of the American Revolution
- Dea. or Deac = Deacon
- Eld. = (Church) Elder
- H.I., H.I.S. (Latin: hic iacet sepultus) = "here lies buried"
- I.O.O.F. = Independent Order of Odd Fellows
- Inf. = Infantry
- Plat. = Platoon
- Rgt. = Regiment
- Y (for older "thorn" Þ or þ) = "th" as in Ye (the), Yat (that), Yere (there), etc.

Get GPS Coordinates

- Use your smartphone to download GPS coordinates (several apps are available to do this).

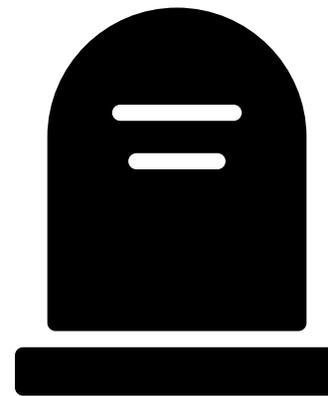
Back home

- Transfer your photos to a computer.
- Using photo-editing software (Photoshop, Photo Gallery, iPhoto, etc.), crop, zoom, increase contrast until inscription is as legible as possible.
- Add a citation and GPS coordinates to each photo.
- If your ancestor's grave site isn't on Find a Grave or Billion Graves, add it, along with photos and captions.

For more information

- Do a keyword search by location at familysearch.org using terms "cemetery," "epitaphs," etc.
- U.S. military cemetery locators: gravelocator.cem.va.gov
- The American Battle Monuments Commissions has data about cemeteries, memorials and U.S. war dead since WWI: www.abmc.gov
- National Museum of Funeral History: nmfh.org
- Ancestry.com has data from many U.S. cemeteries and funeral homes
- A Graveyard Preservation Primer by Lynette Strangstad (ISBN: 0761991304; Shrewsbury Library 736.ST8)
- A Guide to Massachusetts Cemeteries by David Allen Lambert (ISBN: 088-821346; Shrewsbury Library R929.5 LAMBERT or Worcester Main Library, both Library-use only)

Notes for a genealogical cemetery visit



Shrewsbury Genealogical Society

Shrewsbury Public Library
609 Main Street
Shrewsbury, MA 01545
508-841-8609

updated December 2021

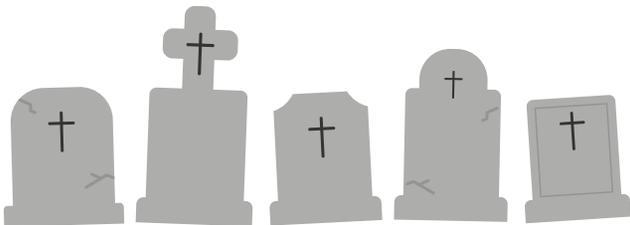
Notes for a genealogical cemetery visit

Before you go

- Check out the cemetery on a website like FindaGrave.com or BillionGraves.com.
- If you don't know the cemetery, check churches, funeral homes, newspaper obituaries, family Bibles, etc.
- Local libraries and genealogical societies can help find local cemetery records.
- Get permission from those who manage the cemetery before cleaning graves whenever possible.

Contact the cemetery office

- Call the cemetery office in advance to find out their hours, etc.
- When you arrive, ask for cemetery map, printout of persons buried there, any other helpful information the office can provide.
- Be sure to verify what their rules are!



What to bring

- Large jug of filtered water (1-5 gallons, as much as you can bring) and smaller spray bottle.
- Tongue depressor/craft sticks, Q-tips, rubber spatula.
- Rags, towel, and a soft nylon bristle brush for cleaning stones.
- Clippers for cleaning away grass.
- Large plastic mirror,
- Flashlight
- High-resolution digital camera.
- Comfortable clothing (long pants, long-sleeved shirt, gloves, good shoes).

Prep work

DON'T...

- Put shaving cream, chalk, flour, etc. directly on the gravestone-- their chemical composition can damage the stone.
- Make a gravestone rubbing-- controversial and banned in many places.

DO...

- Clear away any debris, tree limbs, or leaves that obscure the site.
- Trim away vines, grass, etc. with grass clippers.
- Remove plant material on the gravestone that obscures the writing, IF removing it will not damage the stone itself. (cont)

- Check the condition of the gravestone. If it's unstable, don't touch it!
- If the gravestone is made of limestone, marble, sandstone, siltstone, or slate, begin cleaning by pouring water over both sides. Leave lichen alone-- scraping it off the gravestone may cause permanent damage.
- To remove dirt, bird droppings, etc., spray with water, scrub gently with a nylon-bristled brush (NEVER use a wire bristle brush).

Time for photography

- Spray the engraving with water to enhance the contrast.
- Get down on the ground-- brace camera on tripod or box to keep it motionless.
- Try different angles to get maximum light-- use a mirror to reflect light in shadowy areas.
- Check all sides of gravestone for more information.
- Take several photos of the inscriptions as well as the entire gravestone.
- Further cleaning a gravestone should be done by a professional (in our area, Empire Granite in Worcester can perform this service).