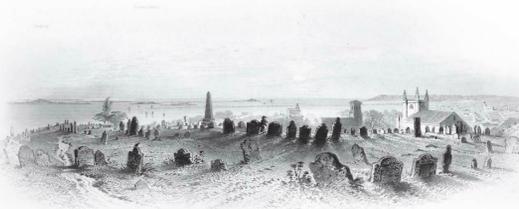


PRESERVATION GUIDELINES FOR MUNICIPALLY OWNED HISTORIC BURIAL GROUNDS AND CEMETERIES

THIRD EDITION



dcrc MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION



These Guidelines are a publication of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA)

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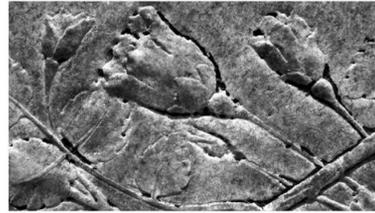
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Stone carving detail, Cambridge



INTRODUCTION

SIGNIFICANCE OF HISTORIC BURIAL GROUNDS AND CEMETERIES The historic burial grounds and cemeteries of Massachusetts are vital elements of the Commonwealth's cultural heritage.

Burial grounds and cemeteries are important public spaces with a vital link to the past. These sites tell a story of evolving burial and mourning practices, from the bleak Puritan graveyards to the richly ornamented rural cemeteries of the 19th century.

These properties are considered not only public open spaces and areas of respite, but also outdoor museums. Unlike traditional museums, these sites present a permanent collection of rare three-dimensional artifacts, some of which have remained in place more than 300 years.

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Once a burying ground or cemetery is closed it can quickly turn from a community asset into a liability. When a property like this stops generating an income and is recognized for its purpose, it only creates expenses, and often there is no one to maintain or watch over it.

Despite these pressing needs, few historic burial grounds or cemeteries have condition assessments, inventories, master plans or preservation maintenance plans to guide their management or care.

Finally, even where adequate preservation planning has been done, few burial grounds and cemeteries have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places, or have been determined eligible for listing.

These Guidelines offer a compendium of information directly related to the preservation, restoration, rehabilitation, reconstruction, management and care of the Commonwealth's municipally owned historic burial grounds and cemeteries.

PURPOSE AND GOALS OF THE PRESERVATION GUIDELINES These guidelines offer a compendium of information directly related to the preservation, restoration, rehabilitation, reconstruction, management and care of the Commonwealth's municipally owned historic burial grounds and cemeteries.

Specific goals of the guidelines include: Restoration and rehabilitation of these historic resources in a contemporary context. Reinforcement of an overall image compatible with the historic assets of these properties. Improvement of accessibility, and Increasing passive recreation and educational opportunities.

The individual preservation master plans and implementation plans included in the case studies portion of this report can also serve as models for both long and short term planning and improvements at other historic burial grounds and cemeteries.



Obleisk detail, Chocksett Cemetery, Sterling

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Endless stone carving detail in marble Watertown



GUIDELINES FOR PRESERVATION PLANNING

Before physical improvements begin, careful planning is needed to determine an appropriate overall approach and to set priorities. This is done through the preservation planning process which has three steps: documentation, evaluation, and decision making.

Documentation is the most commonly undertaken by local historical commissions, sometimes working in collaboration with one or more preservation consultants who may be art, landscape architectural or social historians, cultural geographers or have training in other related fields.

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Documentary Research The documentary record is often the best place to start to gain an overall understanding of the evolution and development of a burial ground or cemetery. Information on a specific cemetery, especially one that is municipally owned, is often found within the community in which it is located.

When investigating historical era Native American cemeteries, families and individuals, the Indian Affairs records from the Massachusetts State Archives and the 19th century Earle Report can provide helpful information.

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The following list of features to be identified and evaluated is adapted from National Register Bulletin No. 41, which should be consulted for additional information.

- Topography, including slope and elevation, both within the burial ground and in relation to its larger setting. Natural Features such as streams, hills and native vegetation, and naturalistic features such as ponds, lakes and land forms. Spatial Organization or arrangement of man-made features within the cemetery (i.e. rectangular grid-like, curving or naturalistic).

- Grave Markers Inventory Stone by stone inventories recording the number, materials, artistic and historic significance, and condition of the gravestones must form the basis for stone conservation programs.

Subsurface Investigations Excavation in a historic burial ground or cemetery is strongly discouraged, but is sometimes necessary for planting, the repair or installation of walls or other structures, or to resolve drainage issues.

Archaeological excavation of burial grounds and cemeteries can be conducted only by professional archaeologists and is generally limited to the search for unmarked burials.

Archaeologists employ a variety of means to search for unmarked burials, including documentary research, informant interviews and site locational models. Field techniques include geophysical or remote-sensing methods such as electrical resistivity, electrical conductivity and ground-penetrating radar.

Unmarked burial grounds can also be identified by machine assisted soil stripping. During soil stripping archaeologists monitor the removal of consecutive soil layers to search for changes in soil color and texture associated with burials.

National Register Bulletin No. 41 offers a description of the type of documentation to be collected. While it is not always possible to find information in all categories, the summary below is a useful starting point.

Documentation begins with compiling information on the background of the site and its development over time. Such information would include the date the burial place was established, the period in which it was active, the circumstances under which it was established and maintained, and the cultural groups, individuals, organizations, agencies, or corporations responsible for initial and subsequent development.

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Cemetery Buildings such as chapels, gate houses, offices, greenhouses, house houses and crematories. Site Furnishings such as signs, flagpoles, lighting, benches, planters and fountains and commemorative features such as cannons and sculptures.

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The primary goal of the site survey is to document the property's present physical character in comparison with its appearance during the period of its most active use and to identify major planning and preservation issues.

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Site Survey and Condition Assessment The walkover or site survey is another key step in identifying the significant features of a burial ground or cemetery.

It is often desirable to take photographs of current conditions as well. They should include overall views as well as details of significant features. While color photographs provide a good visual record, black and white photographs are required for Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) survey forms and National Register nominations.

Documentation research should be compiled into a written narrative accompanied by graphic documentation, such as maps and photographs, if available. In addition, it may be useful to compile a binder containing supporting information which can be consulted when additional questions arise.

An effective way to begin a pedestrian survey is by perambulation of the interior and exterior cemetery walls to search for evidence of changes to the external boundaries, access ways, and gates, and to search for associated structures, former roads, and access ways.

Close inspection of stone walls and fences may reveal differential masonry techniques and a variety of materials, indicating where an original wall or fence has been repaired, or where material has been removed.

Stone carving detail in slate Old Hill Cemetery, Newburyport



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