

The county-wide cemetery inventory should include information on who is responsible for each cemetery and how to contact them. This is important in case there is ever a problem at the cemetery that needs to be reported. CHCs can also proactively connect.

Remember that many organizations that oversee cemeteries are not preservation-focused or even history-focused. They have other important priorities related to managing a burial ground—finances, facilities maintenance, record keeping and all sorts of other managerial and administrative tasks. In other words, their priorities for the cemetery might be different than yours. Be respectful in your communications. Take the time to establish relationship with the organization so they know what you do, why it's important, and how you can help.

- Introduce yourself. Don't assume that they know what a county historical commission is or does. Many of them don't.
- Show interest in their work. Attend their meetings, subscribe to their newsletter, or follow them on Facebook. Make an effort to get to know how they operate, what they're working on, and what goals they've set for the upcoming year.
- Educate about local history. Not every organization will have an understanding of how their cemetery fits into the local history of the area or be aware of the historical significance of those interred. Offer to provide a short program at one of their next meetings, or write up a short article for their newsletter.
- Promote preservation-friendly maintenance practices. When you observe a potentially harmful practice, respectfully address the issue with the organization and offer a more preservation-friendly alternative. An example might be to hand-trim around the most fragile monuments instead of using a weed eater.
- Encourage preservation of the cultural landscape. Advocate for repairing (not replacing) the site's historic buildings or structures, fencing, and other distinctive landscape features. Foster an appreciation for the site as a whole versus a collection of individual grave markers.
- Provide access to professional resources when needed. Many cemetery organizations might not know how to find a stone conservator or a GIS mapping specialist or an archeologist. Help them identify these professionals or refer them to THC staff.
- Help them connect and collaborate with one another. Most cemetery organizations have a small volunteer corps and even smaller budgets. It makes sense to work cooperatively on projects. CHCs can serve as a matchmaker, helping to connect organizations who have similar needs or that have complementary skill sets for particular projects.

For more information, please visit www.thc.texas.gov/cemetery.