Survey and Data Collection

Disaster Planning and Response in Historic Texas Cemeteries
Zoom Webinar Housekeeping

- Trouble with computer audio? Try using your phone instead.
  - 1-346-248-7799   Webinar ID 893 3265 1269
- All attendees are in listen-only mode
- This session is being recorded for later viewing

- Use the **chat box** to
  - Ask for help
  - Make comments during the presentation
  - Share links or tips

- Use the **Q & A box** to
  - Ask the presenters a question
  - We’ll answer them live at the end of the presentation
Disaster Planning & Response in Historic Cemeteries
Webinar Series Introduction and Overview

• The National Park Service (NPS) awarded THC $12.3 million from the Emergency Supplemental Historic Preservation Fund (ESHPF) to address the consequences of Hurricane Harvey on historic properties.

• THC has awarded over $9.2 million in sub-grants to date.
Online Training Series:
Disaster Preparedness & Response for Historic Cemeteries

• **Goal**: Provide cemetery caretakers with the knowledge and skills necessary to build greater resiliency to withstand and recover from future disasters

• **Timeline**: Summer 2021 – Summer 2022

• **Project Team**: Led by Terracon Consultants, Inc.

• **Program**: Six webinars + six stakeholder meetings
Instructional Webinars

1. Lay of the Land: Cemetery Orientation
2. Cemetery Survey and Data Collection
3. Risk Assessment & Pre-Disaster Planning
4. Immediate Response to Natural Disasters, plus Preservation Funding
5. Post-Disaster Recovery & Restoration
6. People’s Choice!

Stakeholder Meetings

• Highly interactive
• Group discussions
• Feedback opportunities
Webinar Series Introduction and Overview

Stay Up to Date!

www.thc.texas.gov/Harvey-cemeteries
Survey and Data Collection
Disaster Planning and Response in Historic Texas Cemeteries

This material was funded by the Emergency Supplemental Historic Preservation Fund, National Park Service, Department of the Interior. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material do not constitute endorsement or necessarily reflect the views of the Department of the Interior or U.S. Government.
Importance of Documentation

- Surveys represent a cemetery’s history at a specific time
- Surveys provide data and mapping of cemetery conditions for preservation
- Surveys provide important information should a disaster strike
- Surveys record historic and genealogical information

Broadway Cemetery - Galveston County
Pre-Survey Work

- Identify existing documentation resources (burial or sexton records)
- Interview interested caretakers and families
- Look at existing map data
Building the Survey

- Record physical aspects of the burial, marker, or funerary offerings
- Information about the interred as inscribed
- Identifying number
- Additional Notes
- Photographs
- Geospatial/mapping
Numbering Approach:

- Determine if a numbering system already exists
- If there is no numbering system, divide the cemetery into sections or quadrants and number plots or graves in rows
- Record numbering methodology and share with surveyors
- Make sure sections and quadrants are clearly marked
Physical aspects to record:

- **Names**
- Birth and death dates
- Full inscriptions
- Iconography
- Associations
- Marker Type
- Material
- Conditions observed
- Orientation

Broadway Cemetery, Galveston County
Physical aspects to record:

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Building the Survey

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- Orientation
Building the Survey

Survey Consistency:

- Deviations in word choice due to personal opinion and/or knowledge (headstone vs. tablet)
- Deviations in surveying of iconography and associations (generic flower vs. rose)
- Use drop-down lexicons or provide an explanation in the written report to create consistency
- Create a shared vocabulary and punctuation and abbreviation system

Broadway Cemetery, Galveston County
Survey Abbreviations and Notations

• Create a shared vocabulary and punctuation and abbreviation system
  • ? For existing but illegible text
  • / for a line break
  • (R) for reversed letters
  • Consult our handout on marker types to create consistent language
  • Some memorials will have abbreviations (Wm. = William)

The above memorial's inscription would be recorded as:
I.H.S. (Christogram) / JOHN ?. BRIGHT / DIED / Oct. 17, 1882 / AGED 49 YEARS
Definitions, photographs, iconography and symbology

Region-based cultural practices and historical information

Definitions, photographs, iconography, and symbology

Region-based cultural practices and historical information

Region-based definitions, iconography, photographs
Building the Survey

Photographs:

• Include at least one photo directly facing each resource in the survey

• Additional photos should include:
  • Details of iconography
  • Details showing the conditions
  • Additional sides or back of resource
  • Zoomed out view of resource in its context

Dory Hill Cemetery - Black Hawk, CO
Photographs:

• Photos should adhere to preservation standards

• Texas State and NPS National Register photographic requirements:
  • Largest pixel dimension possible, minimum of 2,000 x 3,000 pixels at 300 dpi
  • TIF or RAW format preferred, but JPG is acceptable
  • Digital and in color; 8-bit or larger color format
  • Images may not be modified in any way
Survey Methods and Tools

• Traditional pen and paper survey
  • Use a sturdy notebook/clipboard and non-smudge or waterproof ink-pen or pencil
  • Use clear and legible handwriting
  • Use established terminology, abbreviations, and notations
  • Translate handwritten records into a digital format which is easy to share and store
  • Develop a good approach to cataloging photographs and label appropriately ("TX – County-Cemetery name- Block-plot #: photo number.format)
Survey Methods and Tools

• Technical Equipment and Technologies:
  • Use a laptop or tablet for data collection
  • ArcGIS Survey123
  • Arches
  • AppSheet
  • Total Station Surveying
  • Tile Probe

• Limitations
  • Expensive
  • Varying accuracy
  • Some require a professional
Cemetery Survey and Data Collection

Resource Documentation

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PHOTOGRAPHY

• All faces of the memorial
• Conditions
• Iconography
• Interesting details
• Contextual photos
• Length
• Width
• Height
• Footprint
• Inscription element
RECORDING DETAILS

- All information present on memorial
  - Full name
  - Birth/death dates
  - Additional text
- Iconography
- Associations
- Conditions
- Cultural practices
Non-invasive methods to aide in legibility of inscription

- Do no harm
- Raking light
- Wet the surface
- Raking light on wet surface
• Do No Harm!

• Tile Probe *(In Certain Circumstances)*

• Avoid rubbing ANY material on the surface of a resource
  • Including: rubbings with crayons and charcoal on paper and flour, shaving cream, etc.

• Rubbing material can be abrasive and exacerbate discoloration and deterioration
Survey Methods and Tools

• Non-invasive techniques to collect data
  • Raking light from a cell phone or flashlight
  • Wetting stones with clean water
  • Bouncing light using mirrors or a reflective shield
  • Digital scanning/LiDAR
  • Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR)
  • Electromagnetic Conductivity Survey (EM)
  • Take a photo and manipulate it with editing software
How is survey data used?

• Genealogical and historical research
• Identifying significant issues on the property
• Helping to prioritize work
• Serving as a snapshot of the property in time
• Providing baseline data for conditions to aid in restoration or post disaster recovery
How is survey data used?

• Determination of NRHP eligibility required for federal grants

• Data collected should support historical significance and/or architectural/artistic merit
  
  • Criterion A: Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
  
  • Criterion C: Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction;
    
    • Represent the work of a master
    
    • Possess high artistic values
• Data Storage Do’s
  ✓ Make data accessible to others for research
  ✓ Store with any preexisting cemetery documents (cemetery, office, repository, etc.)
  ✓ Submit information to local municipalities
  ✓ Donate records to a public institution (university, library, etc.)
  ✓ Store data in back up repositories like state institutions, interested parties (Ancestry, Find a Grave, etc.), and/or a cloud-based platform
Record Keeping and Data Storage

• Data Storage Don’ts
  x Do not store information on a single file storage system; make sure there are multiple copies available.
  x Do not store information exclusively in local repositories or digital storage devices because in the event of a disaster which affects the area, those records may be lost or damaged by the incident.
Community Involvement

• **Anyone** can record cemeteries with adequate training; those recording should have:
  • An understanding of the data collection methodology
  • Adequate knowledge of the types of resources and materials observed
  • Respect for the historic resources or history they contain
  • Adequate data collection materials

• **Volunteer outreach and training**

Oakwood Cemetery – Travis County
Funding

- Volunteers from Community Involvement
- Sponsorships
- Documentation for Future Funding Including Grant Opportunities
- T-Shirts
- Partnerships Including Local Universities, Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists
You should always:

- Understand the area in which you are working
- Have written permission to be on the property
- Have at least two people on site and within line of sight and hearing distance
- Have appropriate safety equipment and prepare for the necessary weather conditions (sunscreen, water, hats, jackets, brightly colored clothing, safety vest, etc.)
- Consider reaching out to local law enforcement to let them know you will be working in the cemetery (also they may be inclined to drive by and assure you are safe on occasion)
- Remember life safety is always the most important factor
Conclusions

• Surveys provide baseline data supporting pre-disaster planning and understanding the specific effects of a disaster after the event.

Dory Hill Cemetery - Black Hawk, CO
Conclusions

- Anyone can help record a cemetery when they are appropriately trained.
Conclusions

• Surveys should be built off existing records

Dory Hill Cemetery - Black Hawk, CO
Conclusions

• Surveys can be high tech or low tech, but should record the same information.
### Conclusions

- Remember to know the legal framework surrounding your cemetery

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Conclusions

- Remember to be safe at all times

Burdett Prairie Cemetery – Travis County
• Texas Preservation Trust Fund: https://www.thc.texas.gov/preserve/projects-and-programs/texas-preservation-trust-fund-0

Handouts provided

We would like to thank the following individuals for meeting with our project team and allowing us to film and photograph cemeteries under their care.

- Barbara Sanderson, Director of Parks and Recreation, Galveston
- Brenda Holub, Orchard Cemetery
- Doug Kubicek, Chair of the Lavaca County Historical Commission
- Nancy Smith, Restland Memory Park
- Sandra Bridges, Lamar Cemetery
- Sheryl Shaw, Chair of the Chambers County Historical Commission
Questions?

Next time… Risk Assessment and Pre-Disaster Planning