Basic Cemetery Preservation
Texas Historical Commission Real Places Conference 2020
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**LEVELS OF REPAIR**

**Minimal/Surface**
*These projects may be able to be completed by trained cemetery staff.*
Conditions may include soilng, biological growth, adjacent vegetation, loose footstones, releveling, and more.

**Moderate/Subsurface**
*An experienced cemetery conservator is recommended.*
Conditions may require multi-step treatments, adhesive repairs or pinning, and/or the testing and application of specialty restoration products.

**Major/Structural or Substantial**
*An experienced cemetery conservator and/or archeologist is required.*
Conditions may include significant losses, structural issues, incomplete context or inadequate historic structures. Archeological monitoring may be required.

**BASIC PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE**

- Monitor (and prevent) ponding or standing water.
- Advise Grounds Maintenance on proper equipment use (weed eater string, bumpers on mowers, etc.).
- Direct human interaction (foot/vehicular traffic and trash) with paths, features, and signage.
- Encourage appropriate repairs or cleaning.
- Avoid “watering” monuments during the heat of the day.
- Monitor vegetation (including trees) and try to proactively address issues.
- Restore graves following interments.

**BASIC CLEANING**

- Assess and document the monument.
- Check that the area is safe.
- Check the weather. It is best to clean in cool, cloudy weather.
- Prepare appropriate tools (soft bristled brushes).
- Make a plan for plenty of clean, low-pressure water.
- Carefully remove any vegetation.
- Wet the entire monument.
- Using a soft-bristled brush, gently agitate water on the monument in a circular motion working from bottom to top.
- Frequently rinse with clean water.
- Always start with the gentlest cleaning method possible (usually water).
- Test any cleaner in a discreet area first.
- Recommended cleaners include non-ionic detergents such as Orvus.
- Recommended biocidal cleaners include D/2 Biological Solution and Enviro Klean© BioWash©.

**RESOURCES**

- Texas Historical Commission (www.thc.texas.gov)
- National Center for Preservation Training and Technology (http://ncptt.nps.gov)
- National Park Service Preservation Brief #48 (https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs.htm)
- Association for Gravestone Studies (www.gravestonestudies.org)
- Association for Preservation Technology (www.apti.org)
- Restoration product manufacturers
- Federal, State, and local cemeteries across the United States