



# Sons of Confederate Veterans

## Handbook for Grave Etiquette, Conservation and Preservation



*THEY SHALL  
NOT BE  
FORGOTTEN*

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# Introduction

Dear Compatriots,

Following the 2001 National SCV Reunion in Lafayette Louisiana, (my first) I found a great diversity in techniques for cleaning, restoration, and methods of marking veterans. After asking if there was a uniform recommendation, the answer I received was "NO". The next logical question was "Why not?" The answer was, no one has ever written one. Well, I decided to step in and rise to the occasion.

My name is Mike Mitchell, and a few credentials might be in order. I am a member and Adjutant of the **Sons of Confederate Veterans** (SCV) Pvt. George W. Perry Camp #471 in Miami-Dade County Florida, a member and guest lecturer for the **Association for Gravestone Studies** (AGS), **Dade Heritage Trust** (DHT), **Georgia Historical Society** (GHS), **Genealogical Society of Greater Miami**, **USGENWEB**, **Tombstone Transcription** contributor, and **Cemetery Preservation Consulting** (CPC).

All photos are by Mike Mitchell unless otherwise stated. All opinions expressed herein are solely those of the author.

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# Locating Graves

## **Before you go:**

Before leaving home, check the internet for information. Start with the USGENWEB, Tombstone Transcription Project: <http://www.rootsweb.com/~cemetery/> . If you're lucky, the cemetery will be there in its entirety, will include directions, and in some cases a even history on the cemetery.

While you're on the web, it's also recommended that you download several other records. First would be a map of the area. Also, information on the Chamber of Commerce, any local Historical Societies, SCV groups in the area and information on who runs the cemetery. All of these are important, but the most important will be the address and phone number of the local regional, county, or city library nearby. These are your best starting points, so download them now.

## **Field research:**

Sometimes the cemetery information is not on the internet, but can be found in your local library. When you visit the library, check with the history section and see if they have any books on local burial records. Also, ask for any 1940 WPA Veterans Graves Surveys for the county. Research Hartman & Cole and Regimental biographies.

Once this list is compiled and all of the names are known, look through any local history books for personal biographies, glancing through the index and directory. You may find one or two of your veterans listed. Make sure you photo copy every document you come across, and photo copy the cover of the book for later reference.

Some of these records are often housed at the County courthouse. If you call them they are generally not inclined to give you much information. However, if you show up in person, they will give you access to records and these may lead to other documents. Copy everything of use.

While you are tracking down the records, take a few minutes to contact someone from the cemetery and make an appointment to meet with them later. Ask them for a copy of the **interment card** and a copy of the **plot map** for each of the veterans.

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# Locating Graves

## ***At the Cemetery:***

Ask the Sexton to explain the block and plot layout of the cemetery. This will come in handy later. With the copy of the plot map and the interment card in hand, the Sexton should be able to take you directly to the gravesite.

If there is no stone visible, it may still be there. Some times they sink. Try taking a "trash stick" (a wooden stick with an 8 inch stiff metal wire at the end) and probe the ground. Also look for a cement base or foundation on the gravesite. If this yields nothing, look around the area. It may have moved up to 7 or 8 gravesites away by lawnmowers bumping the sides, or if on a hill, by erosion and gravity. Don't be surprised if you find someone else's lost gravestone in the process.

Two other options would be to look in the woods if a rural cemetery, or in the storage area if in a larger city cemetery. It may have moved, thought as lost, an extra, or simply in the way. Someone may have moved it in hopes of finding the proper burial site later and be storing it for safekeeping.

If the stone is found, replace it on a cement base. If it's ever moved again, the base will remain and permanently mark the exact spot.



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# Markers

## Styles of markers:

- **Niche Marker** – small marble, granite or bronze plaque measuring 8½ inches by 5½ inches by 7/16 inches. Usually mounted on walls in mausoleums.
- **Lawn marker or grave marker** – A carved marble or granite block, or a bronze plate bolted onto a stone, measuring 24 inches wide by 12 inches high by 4 inches thick. Mounted flush with the ground.



Pvt. George W. Perry, 1833-1911 and his wife, Nancy Ann Tison. Buried in Cocoplumb cemetery in Coral Gables Fl.

- **Headstone** – Iron, White bronze, fieldstone, marble, granite, or cement. Marks the head of a grave.
- **Footstone** - almost always found in marble. Marks the foot of the grave and usually has the person's initials engraved on it. Some times, UCV or UDC can be found.



- **Hickey or Slant** – granite or marble. Mostly for only one person but sometimes for a husband and wife
- **Companion marker** – Any size or material, usually has 2 or more people mentioned. Husband and wife is the most common but larger markers can include from 8 to 10 family members.
- **Companion stone** – A small marker that shows additional information. It should be centered in front of the old stone.

This is my great-great-grandfather in New Hope Cemetery, Dellwood Florida, near Marianna.

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# Markers

- **Ledger stone or grave cover** – Marble or granite. Six feet long, by three feet wide, by usually 4 inches thick. (See marking graves, Do's and Don'ts)
- **Crypts** - Some times found underground but usually above ground.



There is a bronze statue on top and a marble statue in front left.

This crypt is located in Lake Lawn Metairie Cemetery in New Orleans Louisiana and is dedicated to the Army of the Tennessee, Louisiana Division

- **Mausoleum** – A small above ground structure containing a small family grouping, 2 to 4 people, but can be large enough to contain 35 to 40 people.



This mausoleum is in the Miami City Cemetery and is of 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. William Burdine, founder of the Burdines Department stores.

- **Cenotaph** – A marker dedicated to a large group of people and usually lists their names. Bodies are usually not interred here.

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# Markers

- **Monuments** – A large marker dedicated to a group or Historical event.



This monument is in the city square of Marianna Florida and was dedicated by the UDC to the Battle of Marianna on March 15<sup>th</sup> 1863.

## **Common Materials:**

- **Iron** – very rare, black in color. When you knock on it with your knuckles it will ring.
- **Zinc or White Bronze** – **Somewhat common. Blue-gray in color.** It can have very elaborate designs or epitaphs. It's prone to cracking when old.



Pvt. George W. Wells gravestone can be found in the Miami City Cemetery.

- **Bronze** – Very common, brown in color. Can be dented and might warp. In urban cemeteries, these are often stolen and sold as scrap metal for the price of a six-pack of beer.

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# Markers

- **Cement** – soft, does not last very long. Gray in color and has a rough texture.
- **Sandstone** - Easy to carve or scratch. It feels like sand and looks like sand. Most common color is gray or red. Can not be polished.
- **Fieldstone** – Varies greatly in hardness, composition, size, shape, and type, depending on the stone. This is a stone that is literally found in a field.



This stone is the only non-confederate on this web-page and is from 1912. It's made of quartz and is considered extremely rare. It can be found in the Palms Woodlawn Cemetery in south Dade County.

- **Marble** – of medium hardness, small white flakes, some times with black streaks. Can be hand carved. Can be scratched with a pocketknife or weed eater. It can be polished to a certain degree. It's the most common material in older stones.
- **Granite** – very hard, Speckles or chips visible, pink, red, gray, brown and black are the more common colors. Sand blasted or cut with a laser. Can not be to cut with a weed eater or scratched with a fingernail or pocketknife. It can be polished to a very high gloss. It's almost always used in current markers.

\*Schist and slate are not mentioned because both were for the most part out of vogue before the WBTS.

\*The harder & larger the stone, and the deeper the carving or etching, the longer it will last.



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# Grave Etiquette

## **Recommended Mindset:**

When ever you first approach a stone, think of one, what the Veteran would have wanted; two, the spirit and emotions behind the wife or immediate family that placed the stone; and/or; three, the organization, UCV, UDC or SCV that may have marked the Veteran in the absence of a family. The stone represents the Veteran and/or the people that placed it.

On a personal level, consider that stone as sort of sacred, definitely historical, and actually a part of the Vet. To restore a stone is to remember and honor the veteran, to discard a stone no matter what condition it's in, is to discard a part of the veteran and his honor or discard his history.

Another thought to keep in mind is that materials are affected by time, acid rain, maintenance crews and vandalism, and will deteriorate in time. As with us, the material is "dust to dust, ashes to ashes". Nothing is permanent.

## **4 Mortal Sins:**

1. **Disposing of "OLD" or "ILLEGIBLE" stones;** Never, never. Please! Don't point fingers on this one, it's done by a few so called preservation experts, monument companies, SCV, UDC groups and even family descendants. (see disposition of old stones below)
2. **Discarding broken stones or any small pieces,** in many cases, it should be restored, not replaced. A professional can usually repair it to almost normal.
3. **Pressure Cleaning:** with sand or water. If seen, please ***shoot them on sight!*** This should never be done under any condition.
4. **Strong chemicals:** Bleach, ammonia, acetone or industrial soap for cleaning stones should never be used

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# Grave Etiquette

## Marking Graves Do's

1. Granite is recommended for its durability.
2. Adding information can be added to the existing stone and should only cost about \$60.00. It should always be done by a professional.



Inscription on the front and reverse side of the stone of 2<sup>nd</sup> Sgt. David Stewart Bryan.



Inscription added to the bottom of this Ledger stone of Pvt. Paul Benjamin Jaudon, Miami City Cemetery.  
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# Grave Etiquette

## Marking Graves Don'ts

1. Double marking with two upright markers should never occur. This is considered as very tacky.
2. Double marking with a government lawn marker when a private gravestone is already present is forbidden by the VA. The VA will not issue a second marker just to have the military information displayed. A great alternative would be to contact a monument company or quarry and ask for a Lawn marker that's considered as a "second". This is a stone with a minor defect, usually on the back or side from having been dropped or bumped, or a color streak in the wrong spot. Check the face for flaws, the face can be perfect and will only cost you about \$90.00 plus engraving.
3. Do not encase any stone in cement.



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# Grave Etiquette

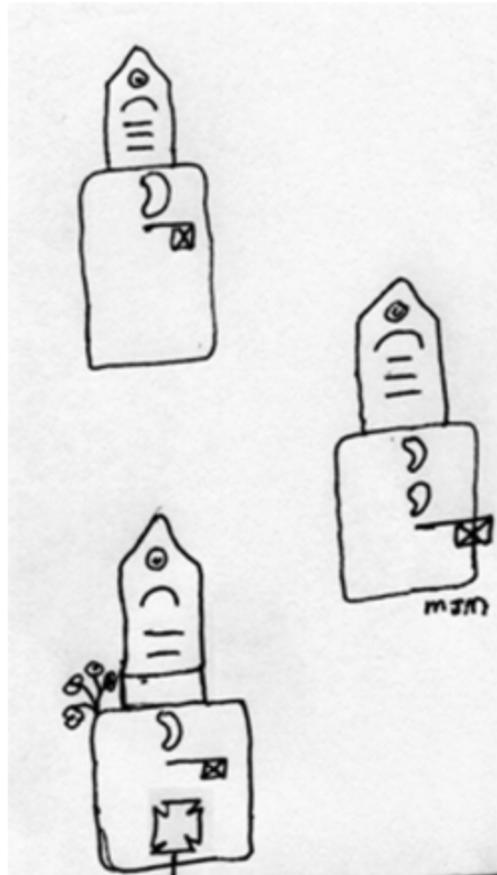
## **Decorating graves, or "Flags in"**

To place the small 4" X 4" flag, place your foot against the front center of the stone and place the flag in to the ground running it down against your heel.

For larger flags 12" X 18", place it 2 foot lengths from the front center of the stone so as not to obstruct the inscription.

If there is a Southern Cross of Honor, or bronze plaque with flag holder, make sure they are cemented in place 6 inches to 8 inches to the right (as you look at the stone) leaving the left side open for the 12"X12" flags.

Smaller 4"X4" flags can still be centered in the front. Flowers can be placed in front of the stone irrespective of the flag size.



## **Disks or bronze grave markers with flag poles**

Bronze grave markers or flag stands on steel or aluminum poles can be easily stolen when placed on a pole. Solder the bolts or screws closed to help secure it. The post should be mounted in the same way as the Southern Cross of Honor, about 6 inches from the stone and to the right as you look at the inscription.

Markers can also be set in a cement encasement or block and placed in front of the stone and towards the right side. This treatment doesn't look quite as professional, but it works nicely. Another option is to epoxy the disk directly to the stone.

Try ordering a router bit from a Monument Supply Company and recess the marker before you epoxy it to place. This prevents screw drivers or pry bars from being used. Bricknell Supply Co. 1-800-241-7105

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# Grave Etiquette

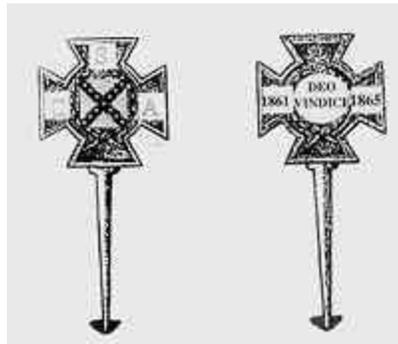


Confederate Veteran bronze markers with a flag stand can be ordered from \$35.50 at <http://www.flagguys.com/gravemkr.html>



SCV grave markers can be ordered by SCV members **only**, through the headquarters office in Columbia Tennessee for about \$50.00 plus postage. They are also available through the SCV website at: <http://www.scv.org>

## Southern Cross of Honor:



A comment on the "Southern Cross on Honor" in Iron or other medals, please cement the post in. Take any screws and tack weld them to place to keep them from being unscrewed.

These should only be used in church cemeteries, or rural cemeteries, Try not to use them in intercity cemeteries. In many cases they have been found in antique shops for sale "just for the cost of a six pack of beer".

Please ask the Sexton for permission to install a new Iron Cross. I have never heard of them saying no, but

it's more of a courtesy.

Placement of the cross is best done to the base of the grave. Stationary crosses can be ordered for \$100.00 from Charles R. Cozzens, 149 West Regent Drive, Clarksville, TN. 37043 or call (931) 358-3740.

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# Grave Etiquette

## **Know the Law**

Know your state Laws and statutes pertaining to cemeteries. In almost every state, it's a **3<sup>rd</sup> Degree Felony** to posses any artifact from a cemetery.

This pertains to statuary, iron fences, gravestones, marble coping (boarders), coffins, even plants, flowers and trees. Body parts and bodies are under a different chapter and laws are slightly stiffer.

In the past, many Antique shops have had the iron Southern Cross of Honor for sale. It's a no-brainer, the only place these are found is in a cemetery. They are starting to wise up because of public interest and you are the public. Politely call the Police and have them explain how they obtained it. This also pertains to the UCV flag stands. As for the SCV grave marker, they are copy-written and can only be obtained by members and for cemeteries. Now you are getting into trademark laws.

VA gravestones are Federal property and the laws are even stiffer for possession of stolen Federal property.

This is a double edged sword. If *you* are transporting a VA gravestone, **have your request to the VA for the stone, military records and the shipping slip with you.** If you have an SCV grave marker or a Southern Cross of Honor, also make sure you have a receipt for these.

## **Disposition of "Old" stones**

Leave them where they are, even if they are completely illegible. A new companion stone with a complete or a more detailed transcription can be placed in front of this old stone. The history is still preserved.

If the stone is badly broken, and if an indiscretion must be committed by discarded the stone, please bury it at least one or two feet deep, just in front of the replacement stone. Please mark the burial card with this information on the back to let cemetery personnel know it's there in case of a new burial or to notify a conservator where to find it if it is to some day be restored.



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# Ordering VA Stones

## **Missing stones:**

If a current family style gravestone for a veteran is in place and a V.A. stone is ordered 40 to 50 years down the road, the more reputable of the Monument Companies will not place the stone. The more diligent Sexton operating a cemetery will either not allow the stone to be placed or may remove any second stone at a later date, sometimes the V.A. stone. This satisfies the Laws set forth by the V.A. of not issuing a marker on a previously marked Vet.

If your "new Stone" turns up *God Forbid*, missing, then some one is doing their job. I have heard of this happening from several people, and shockingly, I have seen it happen once with a WW II Vet. where the monument company placed a new larger and detailed family marker and removed the V.A. stone. They are only following the rules set forth by the V.A.

Some cemeteries will only allow certain types of stones to go into memorial gardens, as in the case of mausoleums, niche markers, so as to match the existing styles. Please check before ordering. This is why the sexton must sign the request form.

## **Ordering Veterans Administration gravestones**

VA form 40-1330 Application for Standard Government Headstone or Marker for Installation in a Private or State Veterans' Cemetery is the form needed and can sometimes be obtained from your local cemetery or from a local Funeral home.

You can also call the Veterans Administration, National Cemetery Administration, at 1-800-827-1000 to request a copy, or **click here** to download a printable copy in PDF format. Reference: <http://www.cem.va.gov/hm.htm>

Hints for approval / expedition.

1. In box # 9, check "other", and specify "Civil War". If you put "War Between the States" it will be rejected.
2. Specify "Southern Cross of Honor" in box # 11.
3. Specify "Applicant" in space # 13.

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# Ordering VA Headstones

4. In box # 27, specify "Veteran is unmarked and the cemetery records indicate he has never been marked". (\*\*see below). Also request, "Please provide a 'Pointed Top' ". Don't specify your desire "to keep Yankee's from sitting on it". They have been known to reject applications because of this. It is however, the legend behind the point.
5. Enclose the following records with the application; **Cemetery** records to prove he is buried here, **Military** records to show the rank and the unit (if possible) he served in. Military records to prove honorable discharge will also be required. If the Military records don't show honorable discharge, then try to obtain a pension record. Anything more and they will have to read it all and may raise other questions that will need to be answered. This will only slow down the application process. Keep the paper work to a minimum.
6. Have the Sexton or Caretaker of the cemetery sign the application in box # 24, 25 and 26.

\* Make sure you retain one copy of the application for your records and expect about 6 months for delivery..

Some times a separate letter is required. A suggested form letter is shown on the next page.

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# Ordering VA Headstones

Your name  
address  
phone number  
date

Memorial Programs Service (403A)  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue, NW  
Washington DC, 20420-0001

Dear Sirs,

This request for a Veterans Headstone is for a Civil War Veteran that has no existing grave-stone, either government issued or privately purchased. Cemetery records show there has never been a stone to mark this Veteran. The exact gravesite of the Veteran is known and a burial card and plot map are enclosed.

This is an initial request.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_ (sign)  
Applicant – Your name

\_\_\_\_\_ (Signature)  
Cemetery Sextant  
Name  
Address  
Phone



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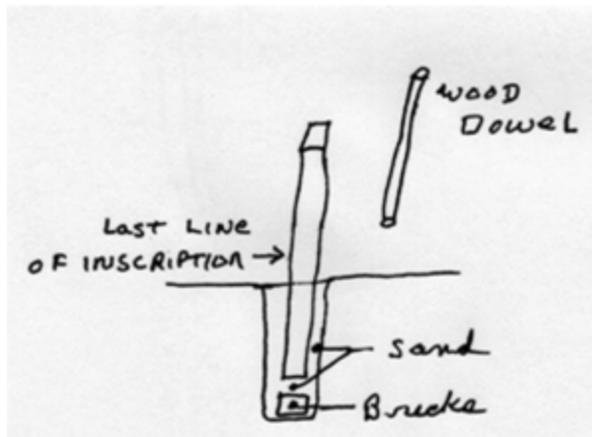
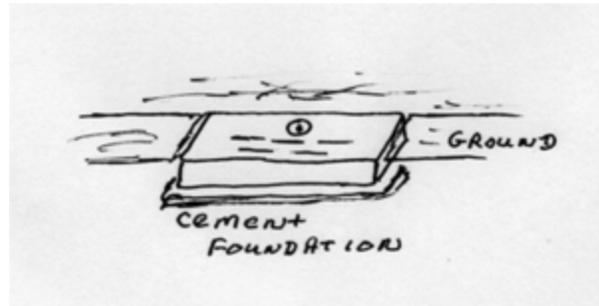
# Setting Stones

## Setting Stones:

In active cemeteries this is usually the responsibility of the Cemetery staff. They will not allow you to install the stone but it is recommended that you check their work. If there is no Sexton or cemetery staff, there is almost always a City Municipality, Cemetery Board, History or Genealogical Society that will usually insist that a monument company place it. In rural or non-active cemeteries there is no one to do it for you, so here are a few suggestions.

### Lawn markers

Never cement any stone into place or allow cement to come in contact with the stone. Pour a cement foundation and let it cure for twenty four hours. Mount it about one inch above ground level.



### Upright stones

Never cement any type of stone into place. Try using a post hole digger and keep the walls smooth and straight. Use red brick for a foundation. Fill one third of the hole at a time with sand, pour water on the sand and pack it in with a 2"X4" or a wooden dowel to remove any air pockets.



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# Basic Preservation

## **Basic preservation:**

### **Cleaning stones**

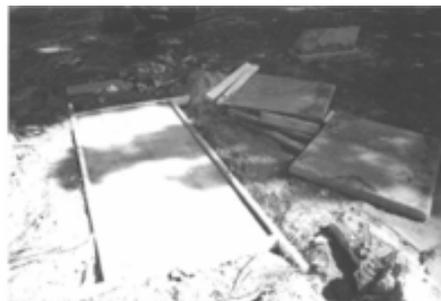
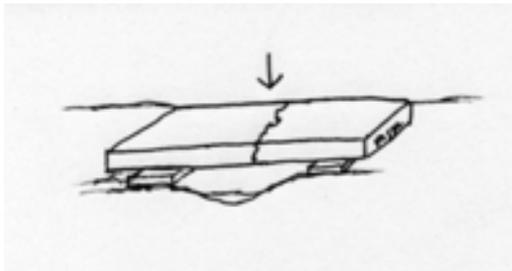
Since there is a plethora of experts, articles and books out there, I will leave this to them. Just let me say I use soap (with out perfumes, preservatives or harsh chemicals) diluted with water and lots of elbow grease. Never use stiff brushes or wire brushes, medium plastic bristles will do the job just fine.

Three good sources are:

1. <http://www.gravestonestudies.org> , Association for Gravestone Studies in Greenfield Massachusetts.
2. *A Graveyard Preservation Primer*, by Lynette Strangstead, can be obtained from the Association for Gravestone Studies.
3. MOS&B handout by Joe B. Gay

### **Broken grave covers**

The cause of breakage is usually due to the coffin collapsing, ground settling, or lawn equipment driving over it. To prevent further damage, place it on a sound foundation two inches above ground level. This will also keep weed eaters from hitting the stone. Start by framing the stone with 2"X4"s. Remove the stone, then remove any existing foundation or supports. Place the frame on top of the ground and excavate a two foot deep hole. Fill half of the hole with cement, place rebar on top of the cement and wire it together, then finish filling with cement. Smooth and level the surface. Let this cure for 48 hours keeping the top damp. When dry, sprinkle sand onto the cement in order to fill any irregular surfaces between the stone and the foundation. The stone should look the same after repair as before but in better alignment. **DO NOT** glue, epoxy or cement the pieces together.



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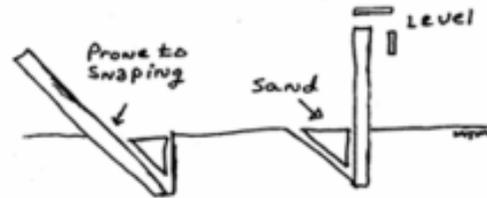
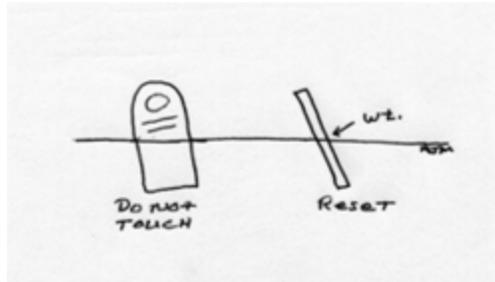
# Basic Preservation



Pvt. Jesse J. Combs

## Resetting leaning stones

If it's leaning from side to side, leave it alone. If it's leaning front to back, excavate the front side making sure to keep as smooth and straight a wall as possible. Repack the void with sand and pack it in with a wood dowel. To excavate these stones, use a small hand trowel. It will prevent you from scratching the stone. This is a great method for VA gravestones and small personal stones only. This should not be attempted on any slate, schist, old or large stones, these have at least 2/3 of their mass below ground and take special treatments.



## New foundations

Let the foundation set from 24 to 48 hours depending on the size of the Gravestone. Do not epoxy these to the cement or set them in wet cement. If the top two pieces are epoxyed, when vandals or lawn equipment hit it, it will topple in one piece.

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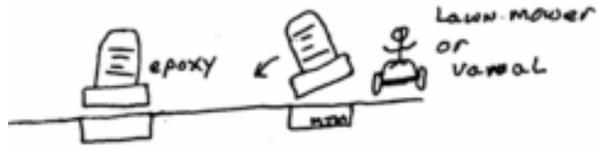
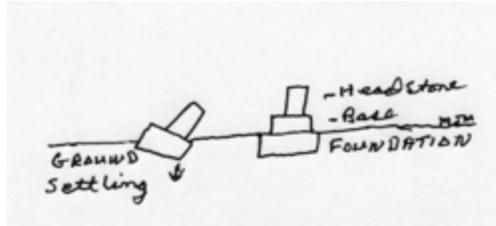


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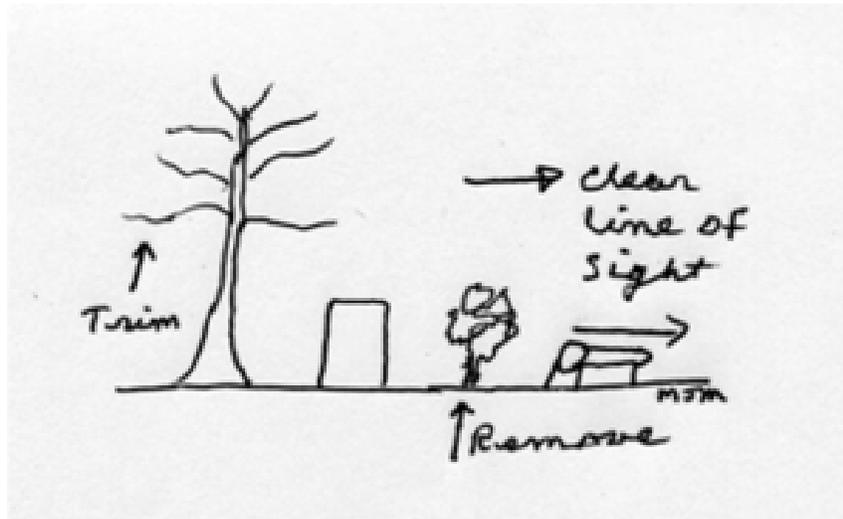
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# Basic Preservation



## Final touch, cleaning the gravesite:

All bushes and weeds should be removed by the roots to prevent them from growing back. For security reasons, you should have as clear a line of sight from one end of a cemetery to the other end. This makes it easier to observe unauthorized visitors and decrease vandalism. It also gives the plot a much neater and orderly look. Before removing any ornamental plants, check with the sexton or cemetery board though, as they may have planted them.



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# ***Project Completion***

Upon completion of any project it is strongly recommended that you compile a list of all veterans, a short biography on each, and describe the condition and what was done at the gravesite.

Leave copies with the Court House, cemetery grounds keeper, Sexton or administrative office and leave a copy with the local library.

Make sure your name, address and phone number are on the cover page. In 3 instances, historians or family members have asked about a distant relative, "a Confederate Veteran". These unknown veterans were not on any list. They were confirmed through military records and added to the list.

This also gets the SCV name out in the eye of the public and lets them know we still exist, that we still care and that we still maintain these gravesites.

If a special ceremony is planned, be sure to invite the local media. Television stations often use such events for "local color" stories, and it never hurts to let the public see what we are doing to preserve our history and heritage.

The last suggestion is to draw a map of the cemetery and indicate where these graves are located. During Confederate Memorial Day, they can be easily found and decorated quickly.



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# Special Touches

**Walk of Remembrance:** During a commemorative service, gravestones can be propped up for better visibility. After the service, have 137 (or more) people pass by each stone and silently pronounce the name as they touch the top of the stone. This is symbolic of one person for each year since the surrender at Appomattox.

**Angel Corps:** Eleven (11) girls between the ages of 6 and 12 in white dresses can unveil any gravestones or monument as a role call is given. Eleven for the number of states that seceded, white dresses for purity, and small girls for youth, symbolic of the struggle the "HOME FOLKS" endured.

**Honor Guard:** Reenactors or camp members can dress in 1 Confederate & 1 Union uniform, symbolic of both sides of the conflict, one person in suit and tie, symbolic of the life they led after the war, and a current military uniform, Army if they were in the Army, Navy or Marine (if this was their branch) is preferred, but Coast Guard or Air Force can be used. Sons of Union Veterans for the Union representative, active military in uniform if there is a recruiting station in your area, or a VFW or American Legion member can be contacted and used. They are symbolic of the present or future. I also use women in black period attire from the UDC or Order of Confederate Rose to walk behind the stone as it is moved from the service area to the gravesite. A small girl in a white dress can also join her. This is used as a symbol of the trials and suffering they had to tolerate during the conflict.

**City Flags – Campaign Ribbons:** As projects proceed, a CITY FLAG can be obtained and displayed at any Church, Memorial, or future cemetery services. City Flags should be used to remind viewers of the location where forgotten veterans have now been marked. Something similar to Campaign Ribbons can be made and hung from the top of the flagpole, with the Veterans Name, Rank and War in which he fought printed on the streamer. War Between the States, WW I, WW II, Korea or other wars can be honored. This should be reserved for veterans found to be unmarked, that have now been marked. They have been forgotten for some 137+ years and should be given extra honors.

**Bagpiper:** During chosen portions of the service or during the "Role Call of Veterans Names", a Bagpiper can be set apart in the cemetery about 300 feet for volume control, but in plain sight. Ask him to play a DIRGE or a LAMENT; Amazing Grace, Lord Lovett's Lament, or Going Home are good choices. A word of caution: If you have Cavalry or Police horses in the vicinity, have the horses moved back as the piper tunes up. The riders can move the horses in and out, getting progressively closer each time to get them accustomed to the pipes.

*If you have any special touches you would like to add, please send them with your name so credit can be given and they will be included. Send to: CSAawbones1@aol.com*



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# ***Credits & Acknowledgements***

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Also to Bob Brown for his assistance with his computer skills.

## ***For more information on Flag Etiquette check:***

<http://www.flagguys.com/etiqa.html>

<http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/ccp/etiquett.htm>

## ***For a history on the "Civil War" style markers and the Southern Cross of Honor, please visit the VA website at:***

<http://www.cem.va.gov/hmhist.htm>

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