

Raising the Dead:

Finding Clues to Ancestors from Headstones, Family Plots, and Burial Records

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Planning on Visiting a Cemetery?

Check List before your visit: Location of Cemetery in the 21st Century

- Has the cemetery been transcribed?
- Cemetery Office hours
- Plot card(s) or location of grave(s)

Rules and Regulations

- When are the Cemetery gates open?
- Is photography allowed?
- Grave Rubbings?

TIP: Remember not everyone had a gravestone

Tour of the Graves (Gravestone Style overview)

- Field Stone or Wolf Stone burials
- Wooden Markers
- Earliest Dated 17th century
- Winged death head, Cherubs, and Portrait Stones of the 18th century
- Scroll work patterns of the 18th century

Gravestone materials:

- Wooden
- Field Stone
- Slate
- Marble and Limestone
- Cast Iron
- Granite
- Bronze

In Search of a Tomb – Urban and Rural Cemeteries

- Beware the Inscription of the Family name or tomb owner
- Tomb Number
- Using Vital Records

Locations of Burial Records

- Cemetery Offices or Ground keeper's residence
- Offices of a Church or a Synagogue
- Town and City Halls: Cemetery or Parks Dept.
- Local or state historical societies
- Formats range from unique manuscripts to online searchable databases

Lot Cards and Plat Maps

Gravestone Transcription (some examples from NEHGS)

- Typed abstract arranged alphabetical
- Typed abstract arranged in order by the actual burial number
- Handwritten abstracts arranged by cemetery rows
- Abstracts with additional genealogical research included
- Typed abstracts in cemetery row order, abbreviated data
- Verbatim transcriptions including poetic or religious epitaphs
- Verbatim transcription with no indication of the order of the inscription
- Newspaper column transcriptions
- Published cemetery transcriptions in town histories
- Published databases of gravestone transcriptions



Are you ready to transcribe a gravestone – Verbatim Transcription



**HENRY H.
ARNOLD
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GENERAL OF
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WORLD WAR II
JUNE 25, 1886
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DSM & 2 OLC LM**

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Common Gravestone Abbreviations

Æ, AE, æ, ae, Æt, æt, or A: Latin aetatis, “age of,” referring to age at death. Usually followed by the age in years, months, and days. When subtracted from the date of death, offers an approximate date of birth.

Y: Common substitute for the “thorn” symbol, which signifies the sound “th.”

Example: 5Y = 5th, Y^e = The, Yt = That, Yis = This

OB: Latin obit, “she/he dies.”

Archaic terms that provide clues to married status found on gravestones:

- Spinster (unmarried adult female).
- Consort (wife; husband living at the time of her death)
- Relict (widow; husband would have predeceased her)

TIP: Given names and Surnames may be abbreviated

Examples of other Published lists

- Published Cemetery Proprietor lists
- Inventories of Urban Cemeteries (Example: Boston)
- Archaeological Surveys (Example: Poor Farm Cemetery)

Tips for Photography

- Photograph early or late in the day, but not when the sun is directly overhead.
- The available sun light should cast some shadow to help distinguish details on the gravestone.
- Take a spray bottle or jug of water. Water applied on the gravestone stone will help bring out the carvings or light inscriptions.
- Use a garden kneeling pad to assist you in photographing stones low to the ground.
- Use a mirror or a piece of cardboard wrapped in aluminum foil to help reflect light on the gravestone inscription.
- To clean off dirt or moss, apply water with a soft toothbrush or soft nylon paintbrush.
- Always avoid using household cleaners, abrasive scrubbing pads, or any hard bristle brushes.