

Global Cemeteries Project

Q1 - 2020

2019 At a Glance

CEMETERY CHALLENGES:

- 5,300+ profiles created
- 1,600+ profiles categorized
- 600+ images added

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Find a Grave & WikiTree

One of the most common questions encountered by the Cemeteries Project surrounds the differences between WikiTree's cemetery efforts and that of related sites, such as Find A Grave. Are we duplicating efforts? Are there any benefits to creating our own cemetery experience?



While Find A Grave's mission is to "find, record and present final disposition information as a virtual cemetery experience", one area they seem to fall short in is how their data is managed, confirmed, validated, and/or fact-checked.

Many users have also turned Find A Grave into a numbers game, adding memorials based on newspaper obituaries or death notices before a burial even occurs,

creating profiles that are devoid of any identifying images, provide incorrect burial locations, or are duplicated through use of cenotaphs or remembrance markers.

In the end, this virtual cemetery experience winds up placing more focus on the individual cemeteries themselves, rather than the individual people (and their associated 'facts') that make up those cemeteries.

This leads to what many users would consider 'Junk Genealogy'; consisting of incomplete, incorrect, or otherwise erroneous data where sources typically appear as an afterthought.

This is evident by the amount of errors that can be seen across these profiles, as well as the lack of checks and balances available to combat duplicates, and incorrect information.

Enter WikiTree's Global Cemeteries Project

Backed by the collaborative power of WikiTree, teams strive to take the same simple idea to new levels, promoting the accuracy, collaboration and sourcing standards that we all have come to know and expect of a genealogy platform.

Members focus not only the creation of profiles, but photographing entire cemetery units, transcribing the information presented, creating and maintaining cemetery space and category pages, as well as providing research and sources for both individual and family units alike.

Gravestone Symbolism



COMPASS/DIVIDERS

Masonic symbol together with set-square. Also indicative of architects and surveyors.



HANDS (PAIR)

Two hands signify prayer and/or supplication.



LAMB

Innocence; commonly marks the grave of a child or representing the sacrificial lamb of God.



F.L.T.

Friendship, Love, and Truth. Symbol of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows.



CLASPED HANDS

Symbolizing unity even after death, it's often depicted on the shared graves of spouses.



Angel(s)

Angels are symbolic messengers between God and man. Can also represent devotion, untimely death, children or innocence (depicted as cherub) or when combined with a trumpet - the day of judgement.



Cemetery: (n) A marble orchard not to be taken for granite.



Gravestone Cleaning

Over the years, many methods of gravestone cleaning have caused irreversible damage to cemeteries across the world. Varying methods of abrasive cleaning (i.e., wire brushes [results shown on left], pressure washing, rotary nylon wheels) and chemical cleaning (i.e., bleach, ammonia, shaving cream) have left gravestones in various states of accelerated decay, or worse, completely devoid of the inscriptions they once displayed.

For anyone wanting to clean a gravestone, there are considerations that must first be identified:

- 1) **Permission** - Probably once of the most overlooked aspects, obtaining permission to clean a gravestone is a vital step in the cleaning process. *In many localities, this is also a required step.* Permission can usually be obtained through contact with living descendants, the cemetery keepers/managers, and the local government (queried in that order). In many cases, cemeteries will also require some form of identification and detailed logs for those who are wanting to clean gravestones.
- 2) **Material Assessment** - Identifying the gravestone's material and condition is another crucial step in the cleaning process:
 - ◆ Depending on the age of the cemetery and individual gravestone, these materials may include those of granite, limestone, marble, sandstone, or slate. With a wide range of materials, each gravestone must be individually identified so as to use the correct cleaning methods.
 - ◆ Condition of stones can be identified through visual and sound inspections. If the stone appears to be unstable (liable to tip over), flaking or crumbling (sugaring), or sounds hollow when you tap on it (a sign of delamination), then all cleaning efforts should be performed by professionals.

After determining it is safe to proceed with cleaning, and proper permissions have been obtained, you are ready to start the cleaning process.

- 1) **Removal of Plant Growth.** Start by removing any outlying plant growth surrounding the gravestone. If there are any members of the family Araliaceae (ivies), the plants should be cut at the base near the ground or gravestone, rather than pulled on, since their roots can run deep into crevices and cracks and cause stress when pulled on.
- 2) **Soaking.** Thoroughly soak the gravestone in water, allowing any surface deposits to become thoroughly saturated.
- 3) **Removal of Soft Growth/Deposits.** If biological growths are present (algae, fungi, lichens, mold or moss) or other soft deposits (bird droppings), these can be removed carefully by scraping them with a soft wood item, such as a popsicle/wooden craft stick. The water applied in Step 2 will aid in their easy removal. Work from the base of the gravestone to the top.
- 4) **Light Brushing.** Using a light nylon brush, work in a circular motion across the face of the gravestone, rinsing frequently to ensure that any debris are removed and not rubbed back onto the face the stone. This should be a very gently scrubbing, with very light pressure.
- 5) **Removal and Treatment of Biological Stains.** Once all physical debris and growths have been removed, the gravestone can now be treated with a biological solution (D/2 Biological Cleaner, Enviro Klean ReVive) or a pH neutral and biodegradable surfactant/detergent (Orvus Wa Paste), starting at the base of the gravestone and moving towards the top. Ensure that you follow the manufacturer's recommended instructions, and always rinse the gravestones thoroughly after any treatments are applied.

For more information, see [Cleaning a Stone Grave Marker](#), by the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training; a division of the National Park Service; U.S. Department of the Interior.

Putting the [Foil] Wrap on Hard to Read Gravestones

@maxwellancestry (Emma Maxwell), #TuesdayTip - Use tinfoil (aluminum foil) to help you read your #ancestors gravestones! 10 Feb 2015



Wax, charcoal and lead paper rubbings were once popular among family researchers. While you can still find instructions scattered across the Internet on how to do them, a newer, less intrusive method has been gaining popularity in recent years, using very simple and cheap household items.

Aluminum Foil & Damp Sponge

Gently wrap aluminum foil around a gravestone or lay across the face of a marker (dull side up so the sun or other lighting doesn't reflect back). Using a damp sponge, press gently across the face of the foil wrap so as to not tear the foil around the carving or writing areas.

As you press across the foil with the sponge, the sponge will gently indent the aluminum foil into the carvings and writings, instantly creating a 3-D impression of the marker that can then be read or photographed (see images to the left).

Some have even found that these foil wraps, if carefully removed, make great art pieces.

In recent years, laws have been passed at multiple government levels prohibiting rubbings of varying methods due to the amount of inadvertent damage they can cause. Before attempting any type of rubbing, ensure that you have verified the governing laws of your area, as well as obtained permission from either cemetery authority, or the grave owners.

Join the Global Cemeteries Project!

100% OFF MEMBERSHIPS

Free is an essential part of WikiTree's mission. WikiTree has pledged to never charge for access to the single family tree.

Expiration Date: NEVER!

Technology + Memorials?



Scan me to learn more!

(or just click the picture)

Alternative Burial Trends

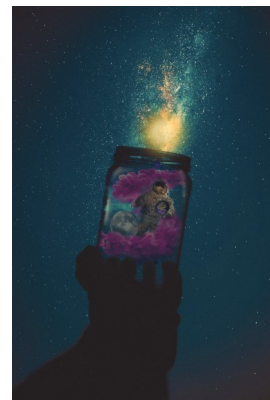
The world is full of ancient burial customs that may seem strange to us today. From [Zoroastrian Sky Burials](#) to the [Hanging Coffins](#) in China and the Philippines, funeral practices have widely changed over time.

As space constraints and environmental concerns have arose, alternatives to modern coffin burials and simple cremation are becoming more popular in today's society.

- * [Eternal Reefs](#) - cremation memorials that help to preserve the marine environment for future generations.
- * [Cremation Jewelry](#) - from urn necklaces containing ashes, to [artificial diamonds](#), jewelry is a personalized way of memorializing loved ones.
- * [Bio Pods](#) - encased in an urn made of biodegradable materials, ashes are used as the fertilization system for plants or trees.

- * [Memorial Spaceflights](#) - from a 15-minute ride, to a lifetime exploring the cosmos, memorial spaceflights offer an opportunity to explore space, even in death.
- * [Vinyl Compression](#) - for the audiophile, ashes are compressed into vinyl records, serving as sonic records of their lives.

Do these growing memorial options pose a risk to the future of cemeteries as we know them?



@sevit tvmz

Member Spotlights

Amy Gilpin

Team Leader of the [Scotland](#) Cemeteries Team, and member of the [Ireland](#) and [Ontario](#) Teams, Amy is an active WikiTreer who can be seen across many [geographical projects](#).

What are some of the cemeteries or families you are currently researching?

I am currently working on documenting cemeteries in [Lanark](#) and [Frontenac](#) Counties, in Ontario, Canada. The most recent one is in a tiny hamlet called Flower Station, where my 2x great grandparents are buried.

What started your fascination and dedication to working with cemeteries?

I started documenting cemeteries when I heard that local gravestones, historic ones that are impossible to replace, were being vandalized.

What is your favorite headstone, or cemetery location, and why?

[Crawford Cemetery, in Dalhousie Township, Lanark County](#). Many family members and friends are buried there. Turns out the Crawford family that it is named for were my husband's 4x great grandparents and not related to my family at all.

My mother's gravestone would have to be my favourite. It's an urn, with a loon, which she would have loved. You can see it on [her profile](#).

What do you like about the Global Cemeteries Project, or which feature(s) do you like the most?

What's not to like? The people that are part of this project are fantastic! The project Challenges are fun too and I wish I could participate more often.

What changes or new features would you like to see in the Global Cemeteries Project in 2020?

I really like the way it is now, so it's hard to say. I think it would be cool to do a Cemetery Spotlight on a cemetery, with history and photos, from different places. Overall, I am just happy to be able to contribute what I can to the Global Cemeteries Project from my little corner of the world!

Member Spotlights

Natalie Trott

Team Leader of the [Cemeteries Data Team](#), Natalie is a valuable asset to the Global Cemeteries Project; spending her days ensuring that [cemetery categories](#) are up to date, do not present any categorization errors, and that related information can be readily found by members by adding the [Cemetery CategoryInfoBox](#).

What are some of the cemeteries or families you are currently researching?

When I have “free” time, I like to work on the [Catholic Cemetery in Fort Wayne, Indiana](#), where I have a large number of extended family, as well as the [St. John the Baptist Cemetery in New Haven, Indiana](#). Mostly, I add cemetery categories, complete with the Category Info Box, and correct cemetery category errors.

What started your fascination and dedication to working with cemeteries?

Walking! I have walked cemeteries for many years, since they are quiet and peaceful, and they lack speeding traffic. Over time, I began to notice the monuments I passed and I started to read the stones.

What is your favorite headstone, or cemetery location, and why?

Favorite cemetery location is the one in my town, with a variety of very old (by US standards) as well as contemporary graves, and the favorite headstone is really a [small family plot with a gigantic monument](#). It belongs to the Ward family of Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, the patriarch being [Gen. Artemas Ward](#) (one of Washington’s fellow generals). My street is on a property that was once part of his family’s farm and is named for his wife’s surname.

What do you like about the Global Cemeteries Project, or which feature(s) do you like the most?

I like the freedom to work at our own pace within the constraints of the project. I want to do a nice job, and there is no pressure to hurry through.

What changes or new features would you like to see in the Global Cemeteries Project in 2020?

More members!!!

Member Spotlights

Rhonda Zimmerman

A member of the Indiana and Illinois Cemetery Teams, Rhonda is an active and high-scoring participant in the Monthly [Cemetery Challenges](#).

What are some of the cemeteries or families you are currently researching?

I am currently working on [Springdale Cemetery and Mausoleum](#) and [Parkview Cemetery](#) in Peoria, Illinois. I plan to expand that, as there are about 12 cemeteries in the city of Peoria and an additional 12 or so in surrounding cities. So I hope to add many more free space pages.

Some of the families I'm researching include [Ludlow](#), [Dehart](#), [Tabor](#), [Hamilton](#), [Campbell](#), and [Zimmerman](#). There are too many to list them all. I do find that I get off on tangents though when I find a name on a headstone that really appeals to me. Then I'm off digging to expand the family.

What started your fascination and dedication to working with cemeteries?

I would say it started as a child when I visited the cemeteries with my parents. Every year we would go out to put flowers on the graves of our family. I was never satisfied with that though. I wanted to wander through and visit the others buried there. It continued into my teens when as part of the history club we would go out into the local cemeteries to clean up a bit and do rubbings of the older headstones to preserve them. As a young adult, I always wandered through the cemeteries reading the headstones and just visiting. I never actually thought about taking pictures of the headstones until I actually started doing research on my family and saw all the photos people had taken and uploaded to various sites.

What is your favorite headstone, or cemetery location, and why?

I don't really have a favorite headstone, I like them all! My favorite cemeteries are the ones that have my relatives in them but I don't live in Indiana anymore just go to visit several times a year. However, Springdale Cemetery and Mausoleum has to be right up there on the list because it is beautiful!

What do you like about the Global Cemeteries Project, or which feature(s) do you like the most?

The best thing about the Global Cemeteries Project is that it exists to get the final resting place documented on or made into profiles of our ancestors so that they can be found. I love that the Global Cemeteries Project has been using challenges to expand the amount of profiles that are listed in our cemeteries here on WikiTree. And I especially like that the Project has taken into consideration that not everybody has the same interests and has a ground team and a data team to do what they like best.

What changes or new features would you like to see in the Global Cemeteries Project in 2020?

Wow! That's a hard one. I guess the biggest change is that I would like to see more people involved in the project but I understand not everyone likes the same things. As for new features, maybe we could figure out a way to do a monthly or even bi-monthly feature of one or two profiles of people that have been added to our cemeteries here on WikiTree. It might help to bring new members to the Global Cemeteries Project and would highlight the members that work so hard.