

## [It's a Grave Matter – Cemetery Resources](#)

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By: Carolyn L. Barkley

Some of my more enjoyable moments have occurred in cemeteries – and if that doesn't mark me as a genealogist, I don't know what does. Cemeteries have atmosphere: smooth slate stones in centuries-old New England church yards, the overgrown brambles and almost unreadable stones of a long-undisturbed southern family plot, the austere white rows of military headstones. I am attracted by sense of timelessness and quiet that pervades cemeteries, as well as their artwork, and the stories the grave stones have to tell. I have walked many of them both in this country and in England and Scotland, regardless of whether any of my relatives have been buried in them. Some of my cemetery experiences have resolved difficult research problems like the Springfield Cemetery (Massachusetts) location of a stone providing the name of a woman's second husband, which enabled me to locate the Civil War pension of her first husband, my great-great uncle, George H. Duncan). Others have been frustrating when I could not find the location of a gravesite. (Despite three attempts, I am still unable to locate the grave site of J.E.B. Stuart in [Hollywood Cemetery](#) in Richmond, Virginia, despite directions and maps). I have met interesting people who have helped me locate grave sites, and I have encountered incredibly helpful cemetery office workers who have willingly provided me with copies of information from their files (and who occasionally have corrected their information based on documents I could provide). I have learned not to go into the woods carrying a roll of white paper for rubbing when its hunting season, and I have learned to carry clippers, gloves and other appropriate tools in the jeep – just in case I encounter a cemetery I can't resist. I would have enjoyed being alive when the upkeep of family plots was a social occasion in which the family met to clean and decorate the family gravestones, share stories about the individuals interred there, and have "dinner on the ground." Perhaps the fact that my youngest granddaughter likes cemeteries, particularly if she can take pictures, is a step in the right direction.

Cemetery research has become easier over the past several years, with more and more information available online. It has also become more interactive, with sites offering the opportunity to post pictures, transcriptions, and information about families and their grave stones in specific cemeteries. Here are a few useful sites (presented in no particular order and not intended to be inclusive) that will assist you in your research.

- [Find a Grave](#). This site is one of my favorites. Currently, it has seventy-eight million grave records and offers the opportunity to search for a specific individual, or a specific cemetery. My first extensive use of this site came when I was looking into my husband's Rowell family in South Carolina (Marion County and Charleston). A contributor to *Find a Grave* had provided numerous Rowell entries in various cemeteries, complete with photographs and the names and dates for spouses and descendants (often linked to their grave stone picture and further family information). First, my discovery spared me from hours of research and visits to cemeteries (sometimes I'm willing to forgo the first-hand experience!). Second, the information included in each entry provided me with many clues for further research, and provided details that assisted me while researching in

Charleston. This experience has caused me to revisit this site many times and I plan to become an active contributor as I discover new information.

- [\*Billion Graves\*](#). I learned about this site while attending [RootsTech](#) this past February. This site invites you to download an Android (available from Android Market) or iPhone/iPad app (available from iTunes) with which to collect photographs of headstones in your local cemetery and then upload them to the site. Transcriptions from uploaded photographs make the information available to researchers. Accurate locations of cemeteries and grave sites are provided with a link to [Google maps](#). Searching the site for information is simple, as Billion Graves enables searches for a specific name and date, as well as a particular cemetery. Filters allow for geographic specificity, and as you are typing in the state or country, immediately tells you whether there are matches available – even before you click the search button. While I have not yet had any personal research success with this site (for example Evergreen Cemetery in Stonington, Connecticut, has only one grave stone photograph currently available), it is one to which I will return periodically and to which I also plan to contribute, having downloaded the two apps so that I can use either my phone or my iPad camera depending on the circumstances.
- [\*Names in Stone\*](#). This site describes itself as a “unique online repository designed to help researchers find and document cemetery records and maps. As with the previous two interactive cemetery sites, it invites individuals and cemeteries to contribute images and information to the site. Again, I had no personal success, but the coverage for my states of interest is still minimal one cemetery in Connecticut, fifteen in Virginia, five in Maryland, three in Massachusetts, and five in South Carolina (none of them helpful in my research). So, get out there and add some photos! Perhaps your genealogical or historical society can adopt a local cemetery as a project.
- [\*Cemetery Records Online\*](#). If you are looking for a source to provide links to cemetery resources, this site will be very helpful. Topics are varied, including [Laurie’s Indiana Cemeteries](#), the [Commonwealth War Graves Commission](#) (personal and service details for 1.7 million members of the Commonwealth forces who died during World Wars I and II), [Barnstable County \(Cape Code\), Massachusetts gravestones dated before 1800](#), and [Texas State Cemetery](#), and [Rosewood Cemetery \(Livermore, California\) Burial Records, 1920-1999](#). Other links can be found on [Cyndi’s List](#) and [Free Online Cemetery and Tombstone Transcriptions and Burial Registers](#). This latter site provides access to a wide range of links that lead to cemetery plot plans, tombstone transcriptions, and/or photos, as well as burial and death registers, with a focus on those located in the Canadian provinces.
- Other sites of interest include [Searchable Cemeteries](#); the [AHGP \[American Genealogy and History Project\] Cemetery Transcription and Photo Project](#); the [Cemetery Junction Directory](#); which provides links to cemeteries in Australia as well as the United States and Canada; and [Tombstones and Monumental Inscriptions](#), which provides links to cemeteries in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Europe, and the U.K. and Ireland, as well as the United States, and various general cemetery-related sites.

A variety of other resources provide useful information – and good reading – about cemeteries. Some of my favorites are:

*A Guide to Massachusetts Cemeteries* by David Allen Lambert (NEHGS, 2002)

*Hollywood Cemetery: the History of a Southern Shrine* by Mary H. Mitchell (The Library of Virginia, 1999). This title includes a photograph of J.E.B. Stuart's grave and a map marking its location, so I know it exists, even if I haven't discovered it!

[\*Names in Stone: 75,000 Cemetery Inscriptions from Frederick County, Maryland\*](#), 2 volumes, by Jacob Mehrling Holdcraft (Genealogical Publishing Co., reprinted 2002).

*Permanent Londoners: an Illustrated, Biographical Guide to the Cemeteries of London*, by Judi Culbertson and Tom Randall (Walker, 1991).

*Scottish Monuments and Tombstones* by Rev. Charles Rogers, 2 volumes (1871, reprinted 1997, Heritage Books).

*Sticks and Stones: Three Centuries of North Carolina Gravemarkers* by M. Ruth Little (U. of North Carolina Press, 1998).

*Stones and Bones of New England, a Guide to Unusual, Historic and Otherwise Notable Cemeteries* by Lisa Rogak (Globe Pequot Press, 2004)

*Stories in Stone: A Field Guide to Cemetery Symbolism and Iconography* by Douglas Keister (Gibbs Smith, 2004).

A keyword search for "cemeteries" on [genealogical.com](http://genealogical.com) provides a list of forty-five titles that include cemetery information. Finally, be sure to check out the The Association of Gravestone Studies web site and the *Graveyard Rabbit Online Journal*.