

section
eight

Cemetery Design Guidelines

Following are guidelines for the preservation and restoration of the Memory Hill Cemetery in Milledgeville's historic district. This section provides guidance to volunteers, caretakers, and nonprofit organizations that have an interest in preserving the National Register listed cemetery. These guidelines offer technical information regarding historic materials and appropriate restoration methods.

The first part of this section lists the guidelines in numerical order for quick review. The second part of the section provides additional information and photos for interpreting the guidelines.



Cemetery Design Guidelines in Numerical Order

8.1 Landscape Features

- 8.1.1 Preserve significant historic landscape features such as walkways, mature plant materials, fences and boundary walls.
- 8.1.2 Preserve the layout of the cemetery.
- 8.1.3 The introduction of modern materials such as concrete and asphalt should be avoided.
- 8.1.4 Every element of a grave is significant. No element should be removed.
- 8.1.5 Fences and gates should be repaired rather than replaced.
- 8.1.6 Chainlink, vinyl, and wood fences are not appropriate to the character of the cemetery.
- 8.1.7 Grass and brush should be trimmed by hand whenever possible to prevent damage to fragile gravestones. The use of power mowers and weed trimmers near graves is not recommended.
- 8.1.8 Avoid using pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers. Acidic chemicals can deteriorate limestone, sandstone, and marble, while alkaline chemicals can deteriorate granite.
- 8.1.9 Consider using native plants or plants that were popular in the nineteenth century when planning new landscaping.
- 8.1.10 Vegetation which keeps stones and walls damp or is causing damage should be cut back or removed.

8.2 Gravestones and Monuments

- 8.2.1 Gravestones and monuments should not be relocated or rearranged except in exceptional circumstances.
- 8.2.2 Re-inscription of gravestones or monuments is strongly discouraged.
- 8.2.3 Damaged gravestones and monuments should be repaired rather than replaced. Only qualified conservators or masonry artists should repair historic markers.
- 8.2.4 If stone or brick needs repointing, new mortar should duplicate the historic mortar in color, texture, and strength. In most cases a mortar with a high portland cement content will damage historic bricks or stone.
- 8.2.5 Stone fragments are important and should be saved. It is acceptable to bury a documented stone fragment if a safe and dry storage area can not be found.
- 8.2.6 Use the gentlest means possible when cleaning gravestones and monuments. Avoid acidic cleaning solutions or solutions containing chlorine bleach.
- 8.2.7 Gravestone rubbings on fragile stone are strongly discouraged.
- 8.2.8 Polishing, pressure washing, or sandblasting gravestones and monuments is strongly discouraged.

8.3 Accessory Buildings

- 8.3.1 Historic accessory buildings such as storage sheds should be preserved and maintained.
- 8.3.2 Historic accessory buildings should not be relocated or removed.
- 8.3.3 Historic materials should be repaired rather than replaced.
- 8.3.4 Window and door openings should not be filled-in.
- 8.3.5 New accessory buildings should not detract from the layout of the cemetery.
- 8.3.6 New accessory buildings should be compatible with the period of the cemetery but not attempt to copy historic architecture.

Interpreting the Cemetery Guidelines

8.1 Landscape Features

8.1.1 Preserve significant historic landscape features such as walkways, mature plant materials, fences and boundary walls.

8.1.2 Preserve the layout of the cemetery.

8.1.3 The introduction of modern materials such as concrete and asphalt should be avoided.

The layout of a cemetery including the gravestones, plants, and furnishings are an important feature of nineteenth century cemeteries. Focal points and axis are defining features and should not be disturbed. The use of evergreen trees in nineteenth century cemeteries often represented eternity. Other plants also had symbolic meanings. Mature plants should be maintained. The introduction of non historic materials can alter the historic character of the cemetery. The construction of new paths which destroy the layout are not advised.



Planned features such as tree-lined access roads and historic fencing should be preserved.

8.1.4 Every element of a grave is significant. No element should be removed.

Elements of a grave may include a headstone, a footstone, grave plantings, ornaments, and furniture. The elements of a grave may have a social context as well as a aesthetic context and should be preserved.



The family plot shown above has a marble monument, cast iron fence and plantings that are elements that make up the character of the plot.

8.1.5 Fences and gates should be repaired rather than replaced.

8.1.6 Chainlink, vinyl, and wood fences are not appropriate to the character of the cemetery.

Fences add to the visual quality of a cemetery and should be retained. All of the fences in the Memory Hills Cemetery are metal. Damaged fences should be repaired and maintained.



This wire fence has been damaged beyond repair. Replacement with a similar fence is recommended.



Chain link fencing is a modern intrusion into the historic cemetery.

8.1.7 Grass and brush should be trimmed by hand whenever possible to prevent damage to fragile gravestones. The use of power mowers and weed trimmers near graves is not recommended.

8.1.8 Avoid using pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers. Acidic chemicals can deteriorate limestone, sandstone, and marble, while alkaline chemicals can deteriorate granite.

8.1.9 Consider using native plants or plants that were popular in the nineteenth century when planning new landscaping.

8.1.10 Vegetation which keeps stones and walls damp or is causing damage should be cut back or removed.



Weed trimmers and power mowers can damage fragile gravestones by throwing debris and scarring the stone. Chemicals can splash onto stones and cause deterioration. Overgrown plants can slowly deteriorate stone and should be pruned annually.

Lack of routine maintenance has allowed vegetation to seriously damage this brick vault. Invasive vegetation should be removed by hand and historic masonry repaired by a professional.

8.2 Gravestones and Monuments

8.2.1 Gravestones and monuments should not be relocated or rearranged except in exceptional circumstances.

Many early graves or graves of African-Americans were marked by simple stones. No markers should be moved for the convenience of mowing or maintenance. The authenticity of the cemetery is lost when markers are moved.

8.2.2 Re-inscription of gravestones or monuments is strongly discouraged.

If inscriptions have deteriorated and are nearly illegible, it is recommended that the inscription be put on a bronze or stainless steel and located at the grave. Re-inscription destroys the original engraving and falsifies the naturally aged appearance of the stone. Inscribed plaques should be attached to a new small stone placed at the grave or other appropriate place not on the gravestone.

8.2.3 Damaged gravestones and monuments should be repaired rather than replaced. Only qualified conservators or masonry artists should repair historic markers.

8.2.4 If stone or brick needs repointing, new mortar should duplicate the historic mortar in color, texture, and strength. In most cases a mortar with a high Portland cement content will damage historic bricks or stone.

A person untrained in conservation practices should never attempt the repair of historic monuments and gravestones. Irreversible damage can occur. The use of a mortar which is stronger than the original historic mortar will damage historic brick or stone with changes in temperature and should be avoided at all costs.



This wall has been inappropriately repointed with Portland cement that extends beyond the original mortar joints.



An example of a Savannah gravestone that has been reset in place by professionals.

8.2.5 Stone fragments are important and should be saved. It is acceptable to bury a documented stone fragment if a safe and dry storage area can not be found.

Stone fragments that can not be reattached to the marker or monument should be documented through photographs of the fragment and its original location and identified on a site map. Fragments that are identified with a particular stone should be buried behind the original. If the fragment can not be identified with a particular stone, bury it where it was found.

8.2.6 Use the gentlest means possible when cleaning gravestones and monuments. Avoid acidic cleaning solutions or solutions containing chlorine bleach.

8.2.7 Gravestone rubbings on fragile stone are strongly discouraged.

8.2.8 Polishing, pressure washing, or sandblasting gravestones and monuments is strongly discouraged.

Historic stone is very fragile and should be treated with care. In most instances gravestones and monuments should be cleaned as little as possible. Clean stones only to halt deterioration or remove heavy soiling. Gravestone rubbings are prohibited in many cemeteries because of the potential for damage. Sensitive surfaces can be damaged even from the adhesive tape used to hold the paper to the stone. Waxy crayons and chalk can get into the porous surfaces of stone markers and be difficult to remove. Polishing and sandblasting remove the top layer of stone, uncovering the softer layer beneath to the elements. This hastens deterioration by exposing the softer material to the harsh effects of weathering and pollution. In general, pressure washing should only be used on stable stone and should not exceed 90 PSI. Fragile stones, especially early ones, should never be pressure washed.



This stone has been improperly repaired. Metal clamps should not be used to hold a broken stone together as staining and further deterioration will result.

8.3 Accessory Buildings

8.3.1 Historic accessory buildings such as storage sheds should be preserved and maintained.

8.3.2 Historic accessory buildings should not be relocated or removed.

8.3.3 Historic materials should be repaired rather than replaced.

8.3.4 Window and door openings should not be filled-in.



The Memory Hills Cemetery has two historic accessory buildings in fair to poor condition which are significant features of the cemetery. The care and rehabilitation of these buildings should follow the residential rehabilitation guidelines in this manual.

This accessory building at Memory Hills Cemetery is in poor condition and is in need of repair.

8.3.5 New accessory buildings should not detract from the layout of the cemetery.

8.3.6 New accessory buildings should be compatible with the period of the cemetery but not attempt to copy historic architecture.

Great care should be taken not to disturb historic focal points with the introduction of new buildings. New accessory buildings should follow the design guidelines for the construction of new accessory buildings in the residential guidelines section of this manual.