

Source – Headboards of Stone 8/2010

[HEADBOARDS OF STONE - A MISSISSIPPI GRAVEYARD RABBIT BLOG](#)

CEMETERY BLOG, WITH HAUNTING STORIES, EXPERIENCES, HISTORY AND PHOTOS, LEGENDS AND LORE, BURIAL CUSTOMS AND GRAVEYARD SUPERSTITIONS. MISSISSIPPI CEMETERIES AND THE PRESERVATION AND DOCUMENTATION OF MISSISSIPPI HISTORY

MONDAY, AUGUST 16, 2010

Gravestone Composition, Cleaning & Rubbing

Gravestones are usually composed of one of five types of stone. This article will list the types of stone commonly found, cleaning techniques and rubbing instructions.

Common Gravestone types:



Slate: 1650-1900 - Metamorphosis Shale

The earliest stone used extensively in American gravestones. The Boston, MA area was the hub of American gravestone carving activity, from approximately 1660 – 1800. Luckily there was a supply of very high quality slate to carve into stones. Many still survive and are most often a gray color.

They tend to be thinner than marble, but are mostly unaffected by the acid rain. Their inscriptions tend to be shallow, but are often very readable. Nearly all of the oldest gravestones in Boston, are composed of slate.



Sandstone (Brownstone): 1650- 1890 – A sedimentary rock / Compressed Sand, etc . The most commonly used stone throughout the Connecticut River valley. The largest group of Brownstone quarries in America was in the East Middletown CT. area, now Portland, CT. There is today one active Brownstone quarry in America, which has recently resumed its operation in

Portland. Brownstone was transported via railroads, during the later part of the 1800's, throughout the Eastern United States and beyond.

Brownstone is a type of sandstone which ranges in color from a dark blond, to varying shades of brown. It tends to delaminate, or separate along its bedding planes. It can deteriorate quickly, turning back into the sand from which it was formed.



Granite: 1860- Current Day - Igneous rock- Liquid Rock, cooled under ground. It is the most durable of all natural rocks. One of the strongest and most long lasting materials which exist in nature, hence the largest quarries name, " Rock of Ages".

Most commonly found in a gray color. Many other regions also produced distinctly colored granites which were more common, closest to their source. Westerly RI produced a large amount of high quality granite which is tanner in color. Another popular granite was Quincy, which was used throughout the Boston area.

Today, granite is used throughout the world in Cemeteries and building facades. It is considered the stone of choice due to exceptional strength and permanence. Many modern cemeteries allow only granite headstones and markers to be installed. Through extensive world trade, granite is now available in a wide range of colors.



Marble or Limestone: 1780-1930 - A Sedimentary rock / Compressed Shells, etc ..The stone of choice in antiquity. Most desired in its purest white form. Marble was white with a satin finish, when first installed in graveyards; Limestone was usually darker and tended towards gray. They are both composed from calcium carbonate, therefore are adversely affected by acid rain.

Once weathered, they may be hard to read. They are likely to be stained and darker in color than when new. The surface is likely to be pitted to some degree. Marble was most common throughout the 1800's, but was also used in the late 1700's, in the early 1900's to some extent.

Cleaning Gravestones

The first question should always be, "does this stone truly need cleaning?" Often people mistake the patina of age for "dirt." They want marble stones, for example, to be as white as when originally purchased – and this is a tragic mistake. Not only does such aggressive cleaning cause irreparable damage, but it destroys the stone's patina – and history – making it look like the stone was placed in the cemetery only yesterday. Moreover, the cause of much biological growth is the shade created by the dense foliage of trees that usually can't – or shouldn't – be removed from the cemetery. Consequently, once you begin a program of washing you find that you must clean the stones every few months. And every cleaning, no matter how gentle, has the potential to cause additional damage to the stone.

There are times when biological growth may be causing deterioration of the stone. In such circumstances it may become necessary to clean the stone. Many professional conservators will also clean the stone in order to get closer to the original stone color for infill matching.



Algae, lichen, fungi -- that may be green, black, gray, yellow, red, orange, brown, or blue -- can be hazardous to gravestones because they trap moisture on (and under the surface of) the stone. They also secrete acids that can dissolve limestone, marble, sandstone, concrete, and mortar. And they may insert their "roots" into the pores of the stone. These growths will swell and shrink in response to moisture, leading to cracking and spalling of the stone. Lichens vary from tiny particles of loose powder, to crust lichens firmly attached to a hard surface (crustose), flat leafy lobes of lichens that can be picked off (foliose) and erect or hanging branched lobes or cups (fruticose or shrubby lichens). The more complex structures are usually larger.



Plant life -- such as ivy, ferns, and moss, may be hazardous to the gravestone because they have roots that will penetrate the stone and also because they trap moisture. Plants should be gently pulled out of cracks or clipped, and then the soil or debris they were rooted in should be brushed away from the stone. The plant's root system should be removed with the soil and debris. If there is a mass of plant life, don't just yank it from the stone -- you'll almost certainly damage the stone. Carefully clip or pull away each section, to prevent pulling away any loose or weakened fragments of stone.

If you're cleaning gravestones or material you would like to preserve, check if the solution that you wish to use is safe on stone or marble. Using solutions instead of water can cause staining and other sorts of damage to the gravestone. Also note that there are still no proven chemical ways to getting rid of lichen, so be prepared to do the suggested methods continuously over a period of time before completely getting rid of them. For trimming grass and/or weeds close to the stones. Do NOT use weed whacker type trimmers as these can scar the stones. These are quite likely the single most destructive implement to ever be introduced into a cemetery, and there are hundreds of examples of the damage that these tools have caused to stones by people that use them to clear away grass and weeds by base of the stone. For site clearing/cleaning, a pair of pruning shears or hedge clippers is also helpful for brush that is too thick to rip out or cut with grass clippers, but not thick enough to bother with a chain saw.

A short list of cleaning techniques based on stone type

Listed in order from the safest, or least aggressive, to the most aggressive:

- Slate: Clean water, non-ionic detergent, biocide solution
- Sandstone: Clean water, non-ionic detergent, biocide solution
- Marble/ Limestone: Clean water, non-ionic detergent, biocide solution, ammonia and water solution, Calcium hypo-chloride solution
- Granite: Clean water, non-ionic detergent, biocide solution.
- Modern Polished Granite: Clean water, non-ionic solution, biocide solution, Acid based granite cleaning solution, include with links. It is most common in a dry crystal form and is mixed with water to form a solution. Its strength may be varied based on the amount of crystals added. Please be very careful, as eye protection and rubber gloves should be worn. Also it may kill grass or plantings in the area around the stone being cleaned.

REMOVING LICHENS



To clear up a common misconception, lichens do not eat the rock, rather they naturally grow on stone surfaces that are available to them, whether these surfaces are naturally occurring or are artifacts of human activity. You will not be helping to preserve the stones by removing the lichen. The gray and orange patches formed by lichens on gravestones give a distinctive character to an old cemetery. These attractive "time-stains" not only enhance the appearance of the churchyard but are often of some rarity for which, like many other organisms, the cemetery is a wildlife sanctuary. Many lichens require a particular type of stone on which to live and, in many lowland districts, the cemetery may be the only undisturbed location in the area for many of these types of stones. There are differing views as to whether lichens damage the stone on which they are growing or whether they protect it. There is evidence that the acid substances produced by lichens can attack the stone, but this effect is limited to a very thin layer immediately under the lichen. Any small cracks present or caused by this process will probably be infiltrated by the fine root-like hairs (fungal hyphae) of the lichen and this may cause more damage. It has, however, been argued that any damage caused by these processes is less than would be brought about by the weather if the lichen was not present. The tough, rather thick, lichen can protect the underlying stone from the weathering effects of wind, rain and frost. On some soft stones in exposed sites the lichens may eventually cover raised areas where the surrounding stone has been eroded away by natural weathering.

In some circumstances it may be necessary to remove lichens and various methods have been used with success. You'll never get a crustose lichen off a rock and keep the rock's surface intact. Lichens cause differential weathering on the rock which is visible as stains. On basic rocks the lichens will stain the rocks by their acids. The lichens also shield the rock from radiation which can lead to differences in color even on acidic rocks. If the purpose is to enable an inscription to be read, other ways of doing this should be tried first before the removal of the lichens. These methods, to increase the clarity of an inscription, include wetting or looking at it in the twilight with a torch shone along the inscription on a gravestone at a low angle. This will enable many worn inscriptions to be read. If it is deemed that cleaning is essential, only the minimum area necessary should be treated. This may be done by physically rubbing the lichens from the surface. Where this is done on a smooth stone the result may be unsightly as it is almost impossible to remove many crusty lichens from the lettering of the inscription. The lichens remaining in the lettering and cracks will probably regrow but rare lichens may have been lost from the surface. Another physical method that has been used is to cover the area to be cleaned with black polythene. It may take some months for the lichens to die but they may then be removed with a brush.



A homemade poultice can be produced using Dry porcelain clay mixed to a peanut-butter consistency with equal parts of water and glycerin. Small quantities of glycerin are available at most pharmacies; for larger quantities, search the Internet for soap-making supplies, floral supplies, etc. or check your Yellow Pages for "soapmaking supplies"; the large craft stores might carry it as well (Michaels, Hobby Lobby, etc.) Just be sure to stay away from "glycerin melt-and-pour" soap base. You'll need straight glycerin (you'll mostly likely find "vegetable" glycerin). Please be sure NOT to ask for NITRO-GLYCERIN. You will have every law enforcement agency in the country checking your personal history and watching your every move.

There is a new product, BIO-LICHEN OFF, produced by Sunnz International Ltd, P.O. Box 13-598, Onehunga, Auckland, New Zealand that is said to be a fast acting and effective concentrated product designed to remove all Lichens, Moss and Fungal growth from most surfaces. More information can be found at: <http://www.sunnz.co.nz/>

Hydro Clean Restoration Cleaning Systems produces HT-777 for use in cleaning Marble. This is a product that when mixed with water forms a creamy, non- acidic paste that will remove both organic and inorganic stains from polished marble and other substrates, returning the stone to its natural color and hue. It is made from mild, biodegradable detergents, clays and powders and will not etch marble or any other polished surface. The product's "wicking" action allows the cleaning chemistry to pull out stains that are deeply set in the stone. HT-777's Poultice Additive is a liquid that contains additional detergents and wetting agents that will enhance the cleaning properties of the poultice. The product is easy to use and virtually odorless. Large areas can be cleaned at one time. Additional information can be found at http://www.hydroclean.com/data_sheets/ht-777.htm .

The Association for Gravestone Studies suggests that Calcium Hypochlorite (e.g., Chlorine, "HTH," "Shock Treatment") is effective for the removal of biological growth. It is a granular product that is not to be confused with "liquid chlorine" or sodium hypochlorite. Calcium hypochlorite is available from swimming pool suppliers. A suggested cleaning solution is one ounce calcium hypochlorite to one gallon hot water. Please keep in mind that this product should be used only when a waterhose with a good water pressure (e.g., 55 psi) is available. Any water pressure over 40 psi has the potential to cause significant damage to a stone, depending on the condition of the stone.

Non-ionic Detergents

Non-ionic detergents such as NP40, Triton X-100, Tween20 or The Kodak Companies Photo Flo are recommended by many experts for cleaning gravestones. These chemicals are electrically neutral cleaning agents that neither contain or contribute to the formation of soluble salts. They are neither soapy (normal soaps are ionic detergents), nor do they affect pH. By

decreasing the wash water's surface tension non-ionic detergents reduce droplet formation on the stones surface. In general they have been proven to provide a better overall wetting of the stones surface than other detergents and as a result, produce better results in the removal of general soiling.



Non-ionic detergents are available from conservation, janitorial, and photographic suppliers in various sizes. Photo Flo is the most common Non-ionic detergent. It is extremely concentrated and currently available in either 50ml or 500ml sizes. A recommended cleaning solution is one ounce non-ionic detergent to 5 gallons distilled water. If you do not use up all that you have made it will keep for about a month before it starts to develop "floaties" and will need to be disposed of. You may want to bring a small spray bottle of water for gently cleaning dirt and debris from the stone. Wash stone with solution, then rinse stone with clean water.

Bleach should never be used to clean a gravestone. Photo on Right shows bleach damage to stone.

Pressure Washing of gravestones is a somewhat new and serious threat to cemeteries. A search of the internet will find hundreds of websites, all with a similar wrong message - "In most cases moss or most stains can be removed by pressure washing and professional cleaning". Most of these websites are for monument companies and seem to be making use of the same standard FAQ. One website goes so far as to imply that The Association for Gravestone Studies is aware and approves of the use of pressure washing for gravestones. However a quick glance of their website proves this not to be the case. Others still are for Cemetery Monument Restoration services - people that should know better than to use this method.



The fact that they would recommend any type of pressure washing is of great concern. While this method may produce the desired results of a clean gravestone, I am strongly opposed to the use of pressure washing. There is simply far too much risk to the stone using this method. Any water pressure over 40 psi has the potential to cause significant damage to a stone, depending on the condition of the stone. A standard home garden hose with a nozzle attached will put out on average about 50 psi and the nozzle may actually cause the stream to be more direct than the stone can handle. The use of a pressure washing system on a gravestone will not only remove the outer surface of the stone, but expose the softer interior pores. These newly exposed pores will have a tendency to catch and hold onto grime and moisture that travel through the atmosphere. Trapped moisture within the stone from pressure washing will lead to a shorter stone life. If used on older stones, pressure washing can and will flake off entire layers of old brittle stone. Photo on left shows extensive stone damage from pressure washing.

Whatever method is used care should be taken to treat as small an area as possible and not allow the chemicals to drip onto adjacent parts of the stone or statue. Before commencing try to get an experienced lichenologist to check that there are no rare lichens present. Remember, before you kill them, that these lichens may have been growing on the stone for many years.



Recarving inscriptions. While not actually a cleaning technique, this is sometimes done to "improve" the readability of faint inscriptions. But it does irreparable damage to historic stones, destroying their original artistry and beauty -- and destroying the historic significance of the stone itself. There are other approaches if a family wants to ensure that the grave continues to be clearly marked, such as setting a new stone horizontal on the ground (such as the example to the right).

How To Do Gravestone Rubbing

Please note this practice has been regulated or banned in some states and in many cemeteries (particularly in colonial graveyards) due to the damage it can cause to the stone. Because old gravestones are an important part of our national heritage, you should be as careful with them as you are when handling other ancient folk art treasures. Many cemeteries now ask for permits before you are allowed to do rubbings. Common courtesy tells us that we should first ask for permission from the cemetery or graveyard superintendent or sexton prior to doing rubbings or taking photographs. We strongly advise to check this information out in advance, if at all possible. How can we expect the general public to respect our cemeteries if we ourselves don't abide by the rules and regulations?

Without question, when it comes to recording inscriptions, one of the most demanding problems is when the stone has become so weathered over time that the lettering becomes almost impossible to read. Tombstone rubbings have been commonly used for many years as one of the primary methods for the preservation of a stone's inscription. The following information is designed to show how to do a tombstone rubbing safely, and when to use an alternative method of documentation.



MATERIALS NEEDED

Soft-bristle brush, Metallic brushes are entirely too harsh, can cause damage to the stone, and they also leave particles on the surface of the stone that can rust. You should use the softest bristle brush possible.

At least one large sponge, Used for among other things, soaking up excess water when washing a stone.

Cleaning Water- You may also want to bring a small spray bottle of water for gently cleaning dirt and debris from the stone. The spray bottle, should contain only water and not detergent or chemicals of any kind that would damage and further erode the stone's material. You might want to use Photo Flo, which is made by Kodak and used in photo developing. Mix one cap full per gallon of water. Wash stone with solution, then rinse stone with clean water.

Kneeling Pads, Towel or old rags used to kneel on or clean polished granite stones. Launder them first, but do NOT use fabric softener. The softener will affect their ability to absorb liquids as well as cutting down on the "magnetism" for dirt and dust. Hand cleaner, Bring along a sample size of antibacterial waterless hand cleaners or wipes. Masking or drafting tape, keep in mind here that most, if not all tapes - duct, masking, strapping tape, etc. all leave adhesive behind. You want to try to find a way to attach the paper to the stone that will leave nothing behind. As an alternative, you may want to hook together several rubber bands to make a long rubber band that will go around the grave stone, using one at the top and one at the bottom of the stone to hold the paper in place. Scissors or retractable razor knife, to cut paper or trim

tall grass around the base of a stone . Hand-held grass clippers.

Rubbing Surface - Paper

Most monument companies will supply you with a special blue paper. It contains wax in it and is designed for doing rubbings of gravestones. The important thing about this paper is not to let it get hot, as the wax will melt and then the paper will not make good rubbings. There are some who have expressed reservations regarding the use of this paper and advise against using it, saying that "it leaves the wax behind and thus creates a barrier for the natural transpiration and absorption of water. It will also melt and turn dark or "waxy" with age and ruin the natural color and patina of the stones". If you cannot find this paper, plain white paper, newsprint, butcher paper, rice paper will work.

Rubbing Surface - Pellon

Pellon works well, never is brittle and you can even find it in colors in many cases. Pellon comes in a variety of stiffness. The thickest which is specifically made for heavy fabrics. The lightest, or thinnest, is made for lightweight fabrics and works best for rubbings. Look for plain with no iron-on dots on it. Once your rubbing is finished, and you have returned home, take out your iron, foil, wax paper, and ironing board. Set the Pellon on the ironing board with the crayon side up, put foil under the Pellon to protect the ironing board and wax paper (waxy side down) on top of the crayon. Iron on a low setting, just high enough to melt the crayon into the fabric. The end result is a very sturdy and frameable rubbing that could last many lifetimes.

Rubbing Surface - Newsprint

Blank newsprint paper can be purchased at larger craft stores or art supply stores in large pads, or also can usually be purchased as roll ends from a local newspaper for a very modest price. Some printers will even give it away. They do however usually need the spools returned. One drawback with using newsprint is that it is extremely acidic. Because it's dry when you use it, it shouldn't hurt the stone or leave residue, however, the newsprint will disintegrate and turn yellow and brittle over time.

Rubbing Surface - Pellon

Tissue paper transfers easily, however, it is very fragile. A interesting alternative that can be used is a very thin chamois or a thin fake leather feeling cloth.

Rubbing Surface - Butcher Paper

Can be found in most Butcher shops or grocery store meat departments. If you wish to accommodate any size tombstone, you could take a (partial/whole) roll of butcher paper, tearing off what you need for each tombstone. Tip - You may want to take your rubbing papers of choice, already cut to size, with you from home at the start of your trip, carrying them in a mailing tube.



Transfer medium

These include rubbing wax, black crayon charcoal and similar products. With either charcoal or chalk, insure that a fixative is used. Be sure that your medium will in no way leave any residue on the stone.

The Oregon Historic Cemeteries Alliance offers the following instructions on making your own rubbing crayons. Gather all the leftover crayons from the kids (all those little broken or remaining pieces) or go buy a new box--cheap ones may be best. Melt them in a can. Place the can in a pot with just a few inches of water and bring the water to a boil. Stay with the crayons until they are melted. Use an old muffin tin (big muffins--not the tiny ones) with a muffin paper (makes it easier to get out of the tin when finished) and pour the melted crayons into the tin. Let stand until crayons are completely solid again. The muffin paper will leave ridges in the sides of the crayon, but these will wear down quickly. By using this method, you can reuse the leftovers of these rubbing crayons, again and again. A carpenter's crayon can also be used, and while somewhat more expensive they will not melt in a hot car.

Fixative

Fixative, such as Tuffilm Final Fixative made by Grumbacher, can be purchased at any crafts store. Try to use a matte finish if possible. Make sure it is NON-YELLOWING.

Cardboard tube or art portfolio -Used for storing clean paper and finished prints.

Pencil and Notepad - Used to record information about the stone or cemetery location.

A NOTE ABOUT SHAVING CREAM, FLOUR etc

A word of advice, DON'T use shaving cream, flour or anything else on tombstones!. These have many ingredients harmful to tombstones (like butane) and in some cases can be abrasive. There are a number of websites that promote this method, with one going so far as to assure that the shaving cream will not harm the stone. Please do not attempt this as you WILL be causing a great amount of damage to the stone and even by washing it after you are finished you will not remove all of the material that you have placed on the stone.

In the case of flour, Daniel H. Weiskotten [weiskotten@erols.com] states that "introducing a starchy organic material to the stone is a death nell for it. It not only will feed the lichens that are there but will introduce new ones which will have little natural competition. Also, wheat

paste, which the flour essentially becomes when that first rain pours down (or the first dew forms) is a great adhesive. Just because we can't see any of it doesn't mean that it is all gone. Those little fungi and microbes love that sort of stuff and it is best not to introduce anything to the surface of the stone."

According to the Crayola website, molded chalk, such as Crayola Colored chalk, is a softer chalk, made of plaster of Paris, which is defined as quick-setting gypsum plaster consisting of a fine, white powder, calcium sulfate hemihydrate, which hardens when moistened and allowed to dry. Sidewalk chalk is much harder than regular chalk; in fact, will actually scratch a typical chalkboard. Saving Graves received the following response from Crayola concerning the use of sidewalk chalk:

"Crayola sidewalk chalk contains plaster of paris which has a gritty texture. Plaster of paris is not considered to be biodegradable, nor are most of the pigments contained in Crayola sidewalk chalk. Also, product packaging warns of colorants that may stain. This could be a good factor depending on the exact nature of what you are trying to do. While packaging does warn of colorants that may stain, chalk used outside generally washes away because of extreme weather conditions and excessive rain. Again, this could vary depending on the surface it is applied to."

BEFORE STARTING

Practice on a rock at home, or check with a local monuments store to see if you can practice on one of their tombstones, before going to the cemetery.

As mentioned at the top of this page, before you start check with the cemetery or with the state or local Historical Society to learn if tombstone rubbings are permissible. This practice has been banned in some states and cemeteries due to the damage it can cause.

In the case of cemeteries located on private property, remember that you are doing rubbings on someone else's property. It is ALWAYS advised to gain permission by attempting to speak with the property owner, and explain what you want to do, BEFORE you begin. If you find that a gravestone is severely damaged, please notify the property owner or supervisor of the cemetery.

Be sure that the tombstone that you have chosen is completely stable. If it is wobbly or the surface is crumbling, then DO NOT do a rubbing. Take a photograph instead. Lightly rap on the stone; if it has a "hollow" sound, DO NOT use this stone to make a rubbing because it is vulnerable to accidental damage.

Before starting a stone rubbing, it may be necessary to first clean the stone.



RUBBING THE STONE

Make sure the stone is clean and completely dry. Tape will not adhere to a wet stone, and the dampness will make the paper fragile and liable to tear. Besides ruining any chance of a rubbing, this may cause you to accidentally damage the stone with your rubbing material.

Cut a piece of your paper or other rubbing material to a size slightly larger than the stone. If possible, write any information on or about the stone, inscription, date, location, etc. on the back of the paper before doing the rubbing so you don't smear your rubbing. Or, carry a small notebook, write the information on a page, tear out and roll up with your rubbing. Tape the paper to the stone. Make sure that it is secure so that it won't slide as you are rubbing and cause a blurred image, and that it covers the face of the stone completely, so that you won't get marks on it.

If only doing lunettes, please be sure that a large enough area is covered to protect the stone. With your fingers, press the paper lightly against the stone. This will cause the paper to indent into the carvings, resulting in a clearer image, with less rubbing medium accidentally transferring into "blank" areas.

Using rubbing wax, a large crayon, charcoal, or chalk, gently start to rub along the outside edges - creating a "frame" for your rubbing. Using long, even strokes following the same direction, fill in the "frame".

Rub lightly to start with, and then apply more pressure to darken in the design if it suits you. Be very careful and gentle.

If you used chalk for your rubbing, then carefully spray the paper with a chalk spray such as Krylon. Be very careful not to get any on the tombstone. It is best to remove the paper from the stone and lay it flat on the ground in an area away from any stones before spraying.

When the rubbing is done, carefully remove it from the tombstone and trim the edges to suit your liking. Remove the tape from the paper, being careful not to tear the edges of the paper.

TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

If you have a general idea as to the size of the stones that you will be rubbing, you could pre

cut your rubbing papers of choice at home and carry them in a paper or plastic mailing tube. You can also use a plastic 3" sewer or PVC plastic pipe, with one flat end cap glued in place to the pipe and on the other end a screw in cap, that is meant to be a cleanout. This way you will have your transportation problem solved prior to starting your trip.

Art portfolios used to transport drawings/oils/pastels, etc. are great for storage and transportation of rubbings that need to be laid flat. These can be somewhat expensive, but are well worth it if you plan to do this over a long period of time. They have a handle and zipper, can be locked, and are great for traveling on planes or long trips. Cheaper portfolios, made of lightweight cardboard and having only an elastic-band or wound-string closure, can also be used for short-term storage, when you will be handling the package yourself and don't need to worry about it being mishandled by a baggage attendant.

Take along a roll of kitchen waxed paper to go between each rubbing which will reduce or prevent smudging until you get home.

If you bring your fixative with you, please take into account that any aerosol type of can, especially one containing flammables, is liable to confiscation by airlines, as it is dangerous to carry such materials aboard a plane.

PRESERVING THE RUBBING

Once you get your rubbings home and wish to preserve them in their original state, use an aerosol adhesive product. Two sets of tweezers (found in "beading" section of art supply) should be used to manipulate the rubbing (paper) onto acid-free mat board, available at most art supply stores. Carefully line up the bottom edge of the rubbing paper with the bottom edge of the board, then gently smooth the paper upward onto the board using light pressure with a roller. Be sure to keep the paper taut to prevent creasing or wrinkling.

If you wish to further preserve rubbings applied to mat board, apply the board to foam core, which is stiff enough to withstand just about any handling. Make sure the foam core is also acid-free, or it will contaminate the mat board over time.

If you choose to frame your rubbings, be sure the framer includes "spacers" between the paper and the glass, to enable the paper to "breathe", and prevent damage from condensation or mildew.

Alternative Methods



Aluminum Foil Rubbing - An alternative to traditional wax or crayon type rubbings is that of aluminum foil & a damp sponge. Place foil on marker, dull side up so the sun doesn't reflect back into your eyes Using the damp sponge press gently so as to not tear the foil around the carving or writing areas and instantly you have a 3-D impression of the marker that you can keep or ball it up and put it into your recycling bag.

Gravestone Rubbing Starter kits can be purchased from many places on the internet. I have listed two of them for you. <http://www.thecemeteryclub.com/artwear.html> and <http://cidermillpress.com/artcrafts&hobbies.html>

Please Don't

Don't attempt to rub deteriorating marble or sandstone, or any unsound or weakened stone (for example, a stone that sounds hollow when gently tapped or a stone that is flaking, splitting, blistered, cracked, or unstable on its base).

Don't use detergents, soaps, vinegar, bleach, or any other cleaning solutions on the stone, no matter how mild!

Don't use shaving cream, chalk, graphite, dirt, or other concoctions in an attempt to read worn inscriptions. Using a large mirror to direct bright sunlight diagonally across the face of a grave marker casts shadows in indentations and makes inscriptions more visible.

Don't use stiff-bristled or wire brushes, putty knives, nail files, or any metal object to clean or to remove lichen from the stone; Soft natural bristled brushes, whisk brooms, or wooden sticks are usually OK if used gently and carefully

Don't attempt to remove stubborn lichen. Soft lichen may be thoroughly soaked with plain water and then loosened with a gum eraser or a wooden popsicle stick. Be gentle. Stop if lichen does not come off easily.

Don't use spray adhesives, scotch tape, or duct tape. Use masking tape.

Don't use any rubbing method that you have not actually practiced under supervision.

Don't leave masking tape, wastepaper, colors, etc., at the grave site

Today, it is best to take along a digital camera. This way you document the gravestone while not bothering it in anyway. Then you can take your digital pictures and upload them onto the web.

There are many books and resources that you can look into for more tips and suggestions for cleaning or rubbing headstones.

Further reading and reference sources

Lichens by Oliver Gilbert. New Naturalist Series 86, Collins 2000. ISBN 0 00 220081 3 (Hardback), 0 00 220082 1 (Paperback). A readable, well illustrated text, framed around habitats.

Lichens: An Illustrated Guide to the British and Irish Species. By Frank S Dobson. Richmond Publishing, 4th revised colour edition 2000. ISBN 0 85546 093 8 (Hardback), 085546 094 6 (Paperback).

Field Studies Council laminated foldout colour charts. Lichens and Air Pollution (£2.50), Lichens of Rocky Shores (£2.50), Key to Lichens on Twigs (£3.50). Obtainable by post or web from Field Studies Council (Publications), Preston Montford, Montford Bridge, Shrewsbury SY4 1HW Tel: 01743 852140 Email: fsc.publications@ukonline.co.uk Web site : www.field-studies-council.org. Also some book shops in museums.

Lichen Identifier by Frank Dobson. CD Rom. Obtainable from the author. Mr F Dobson, 57 Acacia Grove, New Malden, Surrey KT3 3BU at £27.50. There are many colour illustrations from photographs.

The British Lichen Society, The Secretary, The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD or The British Lichen Society website at:

<http://www.argonet.couk/users/jmgray/>

Andrew, Laye, Creative Rubbings. Watson-Guption Publications, 165 West 46th Street, New York, NY 10036, 1972. Introduces rubbing as a fascinating craft with "an immediate appeal to children and adults whether or not they consider themselves artistically gifted." Easily-followed steps for creating both the rubbing and the subject to be rubbed. No mention of gravestones, yet of interest to any rubbing enthusiast. An attractive book, half illustrations, half text. 96 pages.

Bodor, John J., Rubbings and Textures: A Graphic Technique. Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 450 West 33rd Street, New York, NY 10001, 1968. An excellent and thorough description of five techniques for rubbing a wide variety of subjects from all over the world. A separate chapter on New England gravestones as rubbing subjects, and a chapter each on the historical background of rubbing, suggestions for teachers, and suggestions for cataloging, storing, displaying and photographing rubbings. Highly recommended.

Jacobs, G. Walker, Stranger Stop and Cast an Eye: A Guide to Gravestones and Gravestone Rubbing. The Stephen Greene Press, Brattleboro, VT 05301, 1973. Contains a section on the history of grave symbols and stonecutters, followed by a section on five rubbing techniques. Good step-by-step descriptions. Well illustrated. 123 pages.

Neal, Avon and Ann Parker. Early American Stone Sculpture Found in the Burying Grounds of new England. Sweetwater Editions, New York, NY, 1981. Available from AGS. This is not a book about rubbing. We mention it here because of the quality of the full-page rubbings in the book. Neal and Parker have introduced 42 of New England's most interesting gravestones, each

in a double-page spread: on one page a rubbing of a detail, on the other, the inscription, information about the stone, and a photograph of the whole stone . This handsome book sold for \$395, which includes an original rubbing by the artist/authors. According to the New York Times review of the book--and we agree--it is well worth that price.

A gift from the publishers makes it possible for AGS to offer a limited number for contributions to AGS of \$150. First come, first served. Address AGS, 46 Plymouth Road, Needham. MA 02192. 115 oversized (11" x 16") pages. Tashjian, Dickran and Ann, Memorials to Children of Change. Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, CT, 1974. Like the Neal/Parker book, this is not a book about rubbing, but it is listed here because Ann Tashjian's rubbings will inspire anyone who has ever made a rubbing. The text compares the carvings on early American gravestones with other examples of art. 309 pages.

Diandrea, Phyllis M., Rubbing Off History: A Guide to New England Gravestones and Rubbing and Casting Technique. Published by the author, 142 Palfrey street, Watertown, MA 02171, 1975. Offers glimpses a bit broader than those found in most slim, pamphlet-type publications for beginners. Brief sections on history (stonecarvers, symbols, epitaphs) and on technique (wax and foil). Illustrations poor and poorly reproduced. 29 pages.

English Brass Rubbing Centre, Brass Rubbings. 803 South Inglewood Avenue, Inglewood, CA 90301, no date. A catalog of rubbings, lectures, and activities offered by a California rubbing center. good illustrations of rubbings made from replicas of England monumental brasses. Also prices for making your own rubbings and for ordering custom-made rubbings; also for ordering rubbings made in England from the original brasses. 27 pages.

Firestein, Cecily Barth, Rubbing Craft: How to rub doors, letterboxes, gravestones, manhole covers, and how to use these designs to make jewelry, T-shirts, needlepoint and more.

Quick Fox, A Division of Music Sales Corporation, 33 West 60th Street, New York, NY 10023, 1977. A wide-ranging treatment of rubbing and of ways to use rubbing designs in other crafts. Of interest to the rubbing enthusiast who wants to go beyond making the rubbing. Half illustration, half text. The author teaches rubbing at the New School in New York City. 95 pages.

Frisvell, Richard, Faces in Stone: The Early American Gravestone as Primitive Art. Published by the author, 88 Beach Street, Belmont, MA 02178, 1971. The first edition of this small pamphlet was probably the first of the spate of publications introducing gravestone rubbing that appeared in the years preceding and following the 1976 bicentennial celebration. It has been severely criticized, and rightly so, for recommending the use of a wire brush for cleaning stones, for recommending an ink technique to beginners, and for other errors and inaccuracies (e.g., recommending a late afternoon sun to achieve a raking light for photographing stones). Its pen and ink drawings are inadequate as illustrations. Nevertheless, Friswell, a psychologist, wrote an insightful introduction to the stones as they fit into early American life and introduced many people to stone rubbing. The book has had an impact, and collectors of books on the subject will want to find and own a copy. 19 pages. By 1973, Faces in Stone, with text revisions and better illustrations, had gone into its fifth printing. A useful introduction. 19 pages.

Gillon, Edmund Vincent, Jr., *Early new England Gravestone Rubbings*. Dover Publications, Inc., 190 Varick Street, New York, NY 10014, 1966. A three-page introduction that outlines the rubbing technique used by the author is followed by a large and varied collection of rubbings and photographs. No text. 'Notes on the Plates' are brief and are often inadequate and inaccurate. The illustrations may be copied without permission. About 200 unnumbered pages.

Kelly, Susan H. and Anne C. Williams, *A Grave Business: New England Gravestone Rubbings, a Selection*. Art Resources of Connecticut, 1979. This excellent publication was published in conjunction with a traveling exhibition of Kelly/Williams rubbings sponsored by the Art Resources of Connecticut. In addition to a catalog of the rubbings in the exhibition, with notations about the work exhibited and the stonecarver, the publication includes a sound and succinct introduction to early gravestone art. A valuable addition to the library of anyone interested in gravestone art. 42 pages

Kull, Andrew, *New England Cemeteries: A Collector's Guide*. The Stephen Greene Press, Brattleboro, Vermont, 1975 Good directions for finding 262 interesting New England cemeteries. Symbols are used to indicate whether the cemetery is "unusually picturesque," has "interesting carving," "Famous people," and/or "a grand style." Not focused primarily on subjects for rubbing or on early carvings; and by no means a complete list of yards containing fine rubbing subjects. A big help to the serious collector of rubbings, nevertheless. 253 pages.

McGeer, William J.A., *Reproducing Relief Surfaces: A Complete Handbook of Rubbing, Dabbing, Casting, and Daubing*. Published by the author, 102 Brimfield Road, Holland, MA 1972. This small jewel of a book gives the reader professional directions for rubbing and other techniques for reproducing relief surfaces, with special emphasis on gravestones and monumental brasses. The author is an artist and a professional cast maker who has developed his own methods for making molds and casts. He can cast a full size replica (or a miniature one) of a stone, and has done so for the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and other institutions. Beautifully illustrated. A list of sources for materials is included. 40 pages.

Marks, Glen K., *Oldstone's guide to Creative Rubbing*. Oldstone Enterprises, Inc., 186 Lincoln Street, Boston, MA 02111, 1973. Introduces gravestones, monumental brasses, historical markers and collages as subjects for wax rubbings. Oldstone Enterprises is the foremost supplier of rubbing materials. Illustrated. 21 pages.

Smith, Elmer L., *Early American Grave Stone Designs*. Applied Arts, Witmer, PA, 1968. "A pictorial presentation of the often forgotten folk art in the early graveyards of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland and in Virginia." Comprised of drawings made from rubbings; also some photographs. No text. Of interest in that it introduces a number of little known stones. However, the "Design Notes and References" are often inadequate and inaccurate so that finding the stone is not made easy. 42 pages.

Wakin, B. Bertha, *To Rub or Not to Rub: Being a Book on the Art and History of Tombstones*. Lith-Art Press, Woodstock, NY, 1976. Touches briefly on symbolism, rubbing, documenting, and using gravestones and rubbing to teach history and art. Illustrated with poor rubbings. Not for the initiated. 72 pages.

Wasserman, Emily, *Gravestone Designs: Rubbings & Photographs from Early New York & New Jersey*. Dover Publications, Inc., 180 Varick street, New York, NY 10014. An interesting, informative 31-page introduction to the designs and the stonemasons is followed by a collection of 220 rubbings and photographs of New York and New Jersey gravestones. Notes on the plates give information about the designs illustrated, some of which is not accurate according to current scholarship. A useful introduction to some of the carving styles seen in these states. The illustrations may be copied without permission. About 190 unnumbered pages.

Williams, Melvin G., *The Last Word: The Lure and Lore of Early New England Graveyards*. Published by the author, Ludlow, MA, 1973. A charming and useful introduction to gravestone studies and gravestone rubbing, available from Oldstone Enterprises, Inc., suppliers of rubbing materials (186 Lincoln Street, Boston, MA 02111). Six pages are devoted to rubbing instruction for the beginner. Includes a fold-out map (credited to Ludwig's Graven Images) showing good yards. Illustrated by the author, a professor of English and a popular lecturer on gravestone art, and Ray Bentley, owner of Oldstone Enterprises. 319 pages.

ARTICLES AND UNPUBLISHED PAPERS

Halporn, Roberta, "New York is a Rubber's Paradise." Center for Thanatology Research, 391 Atlantic Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11217. 1990. Gives directions to and descriptions of several New York City cemeteries that offer good rubbing and can be reached by subway. Also mentions the London Brass Rubbing Center where replicas of English Brasses can be rubbed (phone 212/879-4320). The author is a publisher of books on thanatology and knowledgeable in the field of gravestone studies. 11 pages. Smaridge, Nora, "Tombstones, Manhole Covers and the Ancient Art of Rubbing." *The New York Times*. Arts and Leisure Section. Sunday, July 27, 1978. A spin-off from the author's book on retirement hobbies. An interesting overview of rubbing as a hobby, which probably lured many readers into the graveyards with paper and wax. One wishes the author had said more about good care of the stones.

AGS PUBLICATIONS Farber, Jessie Lie, "Gravestone Rubbing for Beginners." Published by AGS, 30 Elm Street, Worcester, MA 01609. Instruction for getting started right, written with special concern for the gravestones being rubbed. Recommended for anyone unfamiliar with rubbing using rubbing wax or lumberman's chalk or crayon, especially teachers or group leaders planning to introduce gravestone rubbing to others. 6 pages. \$1.50; members \$1.00.

Farber, Jessie Lie, "A Technique for the Experienced Rubber." Published by AGS. 30 Elm Street, Worcester, MA 01609. Instruction in using oil paint to make rubbings on tough, thin paper such as acid free tissue paper used by art museums for packing art objects. 3 pages, \$1.50; members \$1.00.

Duval, Francis, ed. *The AGS Series of Regional Guides to 17th and 18th Century Graveyards*. Published by AGS, 30 Elm Street, Worcester, MA 01609. This series is in preparation, with two guides now available: Guide 1, to the graveyards of the Narragansett Bay area (eastern Rhode Island and parts of southern Massachusetts), by Vincent Luti. 17 pages. \$4.50; members \$3.50. Guide 2, to the graveyards of Long Island, New York, by Richard Welch. 16 pages. \$5.50; members \$4.75. Each guide gives directions and information about the stones to be found in choice yards in the area. Excellent illustrations.

THE ASSOCIATION FOR GRAVESTONE STUDIES A TECHNIQUE FOR THE EXPERIENCED RUBBER by Jessie Lie Farber NOTE: Whether you are an experienced rubber or a beginner, this information sheet should be read after reading the information sheet, "Gravestone Rubbing for Beginners," available from the Association for Gravestone Studies, 30 Elm Street, Worcester, MA 01609. An increasing number of early graveyards restrict stone-rubbing, and for good reason: an inexperienced rubber or a careless one can do permanent damage to historically and artistically precious old gravestone carvings. The technique described here is one that poses the particular threat of getting paint on the stone, a defacement difficult if not impossible to correct. For this reason, the technique is not recommended for use by anyone without considerable experience in the art of gravestone rubbing.

POSTED BY [ANGELA LUCIUS](#) ON [MONDAY, AUGUST 16, 2010](#)

<http://headboardsofstone.blogspot.com/2010/08/gravestone-composition-cleaning-rubbing.html>