

Historic Grave Markers in Stone

What is “historic” when we talk about cemeteries and grave markers or stone work found in a cemetery? “Historic” can take on several definitions or meanings in the world of cemeteries. Webster’s defines it as, famous or important, having great and lasting importance, known or established in the past, dating from or preserved from a past time or culture. All of these definitions are well suited when describing a cemetery and its grave markers. The summation of these definitions in a single word like historic can fit either the cemetery or the individual grave marker. But in the world of cemeteries this simple word can actually be somewhat murky and complicated. It would seem the designation “historic” is most often used by federal, state, and local entities to describe these places for reasons of protection, liability, designation, land ownership, or tax and real-estate purposes. And also to fit the particular view of that community or entity to describe what they feel is historic in nature. But none of this actually gets to the heart of what is historic according to any type of across the board scale or timeline. And so historic becomes very much in the eye of the beholder.



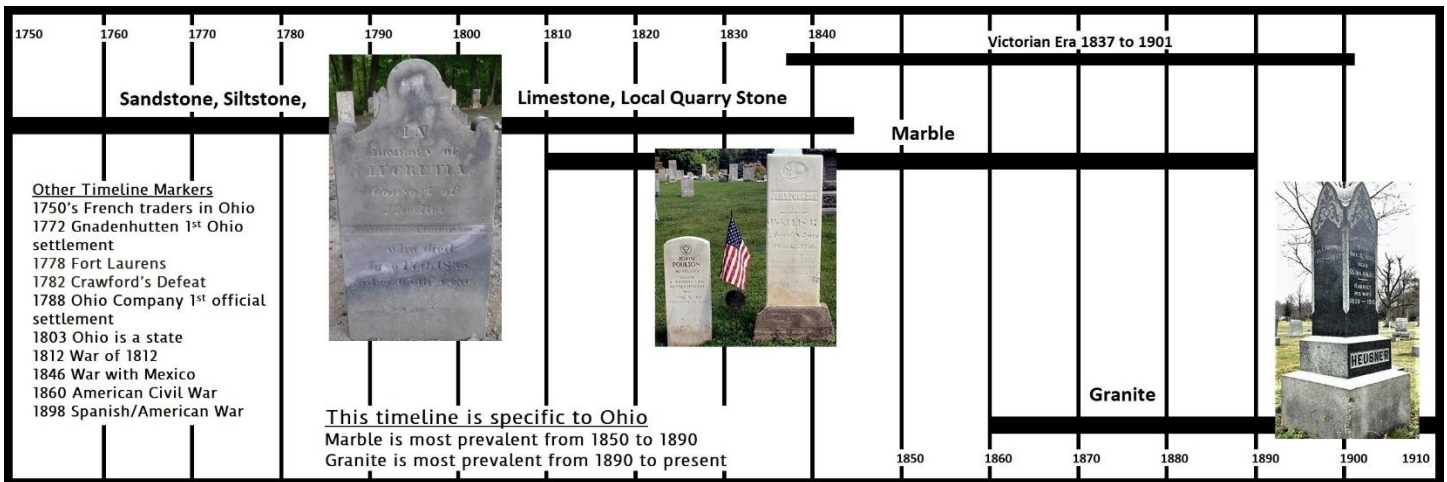
We are going to attempt to lend this well suited word some clarity when it comes to cemeteries and grave markers. We are going to focus more on the individual grave marker and less on the particular cemetery to do this. A cemetery may easily reflect a historic nature for many reasons such as, being in a famous town or area, containing famous people, being significant to a particular group of burials such as a battlefield, or being the final resting place of the founding area pioneers. But this does not reflect or address the different stone types, styles, or particular ages of the actual grave markers contained in the given cemetery. The cemetery itself may have a hundred years of burials and markers that span more than one era of stone type or style. A cemetery may also be closed to further burials and thus locked into the timeframe of its activity. A cemetery could also be 200 years old but still receiving burials, thus making it a “current cemetery”. Quite often cemeteries closed to further burials get the designation “pioneer cemetery”. And old well established cemeteries that still have current burials, refer to the early burial area as “the old section” These are just a couple of the most prevalent examples of how cemeteries are designated. But cemeteries themselves are a very wide ranging thing that can change dramatically every few miles. And because of this, we feel it is better to address the definition of historic by looking at the individual grave marker and look at its material, age, and style.

Let’s first begin by saying grave markers can be and are made of practically any material available to anyone at the time of its manufacturing. But for now, let’s set that aside and address it later. Let’s focus on the most common stone types used that we often see in a cemetery. This will depend on the age of the area, the geographical region, and the style of the era. The area’s age and region have a bearing on the stone type in this way. Age of an area relates to era and that often determined what was technically possible at that time, as well as what type of material was available. Importation of different materials was not impossible, but the older the era, the more difficult the transportation may have been. So grave markers were quite often carved using stone from the local quarries used in early building and development. The style in which the marker was carved first relates to the technology available and the skill of the carver. Influence on the style is wide ranging due to a combination of religious belief, national origin, or wide sweeping global styles like the Victorian Era. These three connective factors, area, region, and style can be used to make up a timeline that we can use to determine a better sense of historic.

We are going to apply this template to region, state, and area where applicable and reflect this in a timeline. We realize many states and areas have their own version when it comes to historical designation. We will do our best to list those designation versions state by state as we find them. As always please do what you can to seek and find your state or areas views and laws pertaining to what they designate as historic. Our guide to what we view as historic is just that, a guide. It is meant to aid in preservation, stone identification, and for a better understanding of grave marker age and history. Stating exact dates is very difficult if not impossible. We are going to go by what has been observed and documented according to death date on the grave marker. This is not always the most accurate because some grave markers may have been placed at a later date or could also be a replacement for an original marker. We are making our timeline dates based on an overall picture and determination with widely gathered information.

It is the consensus among CCUS conservators, to place the date at 1900 to 1910 for the cut off on what we view as historic grave markers. This date seems to fall in line with many other entities across the country.

All timelines reflect stone types that were or are in most common use, and do not reflect other possible stone types that are or may have been used. Other factors that have an overall bearing such as uncommon material use and economic circumstance of the deceased will be addressed later. These materials range from concrete to zinc.



Region...Midwest

State...Ohio – Statehood 1803

Native Material...Sandstone, Siltstones, Limestone, Marble, and other natural stones to the state

Historic Age...Pre 1750 to 1900

Style...Heavy secular New England and Victorian Era mainly